



Perwakilan

Journal of Good Governance, Diplomacy, Customary Institutionalization and Social Networks
Vol. 2 (2024), pp. 29-37

Civic Education as Strategies to Strengthen the National Identity of Indonesian Students

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Publication date: 30 June 2024

Abstract:

This study explores comprehensive strategies to strengthen national identity among Indonesian students, addressing the crucial need for a cohesive national identity in Indonesia's ethnically and culturally diverse society. The research identifies and analyzes several key approaches, including curriculum development, extracurricular activities, cultural immersion programs, and the use of digital media, to foster a strong sense of national pride and unity. The integration of national history, civic education, and values into the school curriculum is highlighted as fundamental. By ensuring that students receive a thorough understanding of Indonesia's heritage, struggles for independence, and national achievements, educational institutions can instill a deep sense of belonging and responsibility towards the nation. Extracurricular activities, such as student organizations, sports, arts, and community service projects, are also emphasized for their role in providing experiential learning opportunities that reinforce national values and social cohesion. Cultural immersion programs are identified as another critical strategy. These programs, which include traditional arts, music, dance, and language preservation initiatives, allow students to engage with Indonesia's rich cultural tapestry, fostering appreciation and respect for the nation's diversity. Furthermore, the strategic use of digital media is examined as a modern approach to connecting students across different regions and promoting national narratives. Digital platforms can disseminate stories of national heroes, cultural heritage, and contemporary achievements, thereby enhancing students' collective national consciousness. The study underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach involving educational institutions, government policies, and community participation. It recommends that policymakers and educators collaborate to implement these strategies effectively, creating an environment that nurtures a strong, cohesive national identity among Indonesian youth. By doing so, the nation can build a resilient and unified future generation capable of contributing positively to Indonesia's development and stability.

Keywords: national identity, Indonesian students, extracurricular activities, civic education

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<https://doi.org/10.58764/j.prwkl.2024.2.69>

1. Introduction

National integration is the process of uniting different parts of a society into a more cohesive whole or merging many smaller communities into one nation. This process involves harmonizing various societal elements that differ in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, and language to create a cohesive national identity (Rubin, 2016). National integration aims to form a stable and united country where every member of society feels a sense of belonging and actively participates in national life. The concept of national integration is closely linked to social integration, which refers to blending different societal groups into a larger, unified group. Social integration involves eliminating the differences and individual identities of people or groups, thus creating a new collective identity. In this process, the elements that distinguish the original groups are accommodated and integrated into a larger social framework, so these differences no longer hinder the achievement of unity and cohesion (Usmi & Samsuri, 2022).

In the context of social integration, this process is often considered synonymous with assimilation or renewal. Assimilation refers to the process where different groups adopt the norms, values, and culture of the dominant group, thereby reducing or even eliminating differences between groups. Renewal, on the other hand, involves modifying or adjusting existing elements to create a new identity that is more inclusive and representative of all members of society. National and social integration are two interrelated and equally important concepts in building a strong and united nation. This process requires a commitment from all societal elements to respect each other, accommodate differences, and work together towards common goals. Only then can a country achieve stability, progress, and sustainable prosperity for all its citizens (Yufriadi et al., 2024).

Although the characteristics of each nation's individuals vary depending on their respective backgrounds, national identity is a singular concept that defines the unique characteristics of a nation and allows for comparison with other nations. National identity encompasses various aspects such as culture, language, history, and values that are highly esteemed by a nation. In Indonesia, national identity plays a crucial role in uniting ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, thus creating a strong unity amidst differences. To build a strong

and sustainable nation, understanding and appreciation of this national identity must be continually reinforced. Indonesia, as a nation with a long history of struggle for independence, has undergone various phases in nurturing its golden generations. As a nation founded on Pancasila, Indonesia has an important duty to explain and teach the history of independence to the younger generation. Pancasila, as the foundation of the state ideology, serves as the moral and ethical basis for all citizens. The values embedded in Pancasila reflect the principles of national and state life that are simple yet profound. Therefore, a strong understanding of the history and values of Pancasila is key to fostering pride and responsibility among the younger generation (Laing et al., 2018; Yufriadi et al., 2023).

Pancasila not only serves as the basis of political ideology but also as the prominent spirit in the daily lives of Indonesians. The values embodied in each principle of Pancasila should be the primary guidelines for actions and interactions within society. When these values are internalized effectively, ethical consciousness, referred to as "Relative Consciousness," becomes crucial for every citizen. This consciousness emphasizes the understanding that individual actions must always consider their impact on the broader society and nation. Pancasila, as the fundamental identity of the Indonesian nation, should always be the reference point for actions and behaviours. The values within Pancasila often do not manifest in the daily behaviours of Indonesian citizens.

Many actions and decisions made by individuals or groups often do not reflect the fundamental principles of Pancasila. For example, humanitarian values, social justice, and unity are frequently neglected in daily practices. This highlights the need for more intensive efforts in education and dissemination of Pancasila values so that Indonesia's national identity can be preserved and strengthened. Formal and informal education must emphasize the importance of applying Pancasila values in daily life, enabling all citizens to contribute to building a better and sustainable nation. Civic education plays a crucial role in efforts to strengthen the national identity of Indonesia, focusing on students (Hariantio et al., 2019). Civic education is not just a subject matter to be learned; it is also a platform for exploring, appreciating, and fostering love for the country. In this context, it is

important to modify the approach to civic education so that it remains relevant to the current developments and the needs of today's youth.

Effective civic education should be able to utilize and combine various materials, methods, and learning media that are available. The content delivered should not only cover historical and constitutional aspects but also integrate the values of Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as the foundation of Indonesia's nationality. Interactive and participatory methods are also necessary to encourage students to think critically, appreciate differences, and actively contribute to building a fair and civilized society. The rapid development of information and communication technology, which is characteristic of today's younger generation, can be optimally utilized in civic education. The use of digital media, interactive simulations, and educational applications can help strengthen students' learning experiences and understanding of national values. Through this technology, historical information, national contexts, and global challenges can be presented dynamically and attractively, in line with the preferences and learning styles of children and teenagers today (Kurniawan & Afifi, 2024; Santoso, 2021).

In addition to utilizing technology, an inclusive approach to civic education should also encourage students to actively engage in real-life activities that support the formation of national identity. For example, through collaborative projects among students that address national themes, visits to historical sites, or participation in social activities that promote humanitarian values and justice. In this way, students not only gain theoretical understanding but also directly experience how these values can be implemented in everyday life. Well-integrated civic education, keeping pace with developments and leveraging technology effectively is key to building a younger generation with a deep understanding and high involvement in Indonesia's national identity. Through education focused on building strong character and citizenship awareness, it is hoped that Indonesia can ensure the continuity of national values that serve as the foundation of unity and diversity in the long term (Baildon & Alviar-Martin, 2020).

This research aims to explore various effective strategies to strengthen national identity among Indonesian students. National identity is defined as a deep understanding of the unique characteristics of a nation, including its history, culture, language, and cherished values. In Indonesia, which is rich in ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, reinforcing national identity is crucial for building a strong

unity while respecting diversity. The study will investigate diverse educational approaches, including integrating national values such as Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika into formal curricula and utilizing information and communication technology to dynamically and engagingly convey national values. It is hoped that the findings of this research will provide useful guidance for policymakers in education, educators, and the community to strengthen national pride in Indonesia amidst evolving global challenges and social dynamics.

2. Method

This study employs a literature review method, examining books and journals that have extensively discussed strategies to strengthen national identity among students. This method is chosen because it allows researchers to gain comprehensive insights from various theoretical and empirical perspectives that already exist. The research process begins with the collection of relevant literature on strategies for strengthening national identity, particularly focusing on the context of education in Indonesia, from sources such as books, academic journals, scientific articles, and research reports. The data and information obtained are then descriptively analyzed, aiming to provide a detailed depiction of the concept of national identity, the influencing factors, and the role of education in strengthening national identity among students.

Based on the analysis results, a theoretical framework is developed that outlines the concept and dynamics of Indonesian national identity and the strategies that can be implemented in the educational context. The study is then organized into several main sections: first, a discussion on the national identity of Indonesia, including its elements and significance; second, an analysis of the current conditions of Indonesia's national identity, encompassing the challenges and opportunities faced; and third, an exploration of strategies for strengthening national identity among students, focusing on curriculum integration, extracurricular activities, cultural immersion programs, and the use of digital media in education (Sari et al., 2024). By using this literature review approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the importance of national identity and effective strategies to strengthen it among students through various educational aspects in Indonesia.

3. Result and discussion

3.1. National Identity of the Nation

Etymologically, the term "identity" originates from English, namely "identity," which means characteristics, signs, or identifiers associated with something that distinguishes it from others. The term "national" signifies an identity associated with a larger group bound by similarities, whether physical, such as culture, religion, and language, or non-physical, such as desires, aspirations, and goals. The concept of national identity ultimately aims at the emergence of group activities manifested in organizations or nationalist movements. The term "national" itself is inseparable from the birth of the concept of nationalism (Wijaya et al., 2023). According to Yufriadi (2023), the policy of national identity is that the identity of a particular nation cannot be explained solely by its name or, more frequently used, the term "individual nation." The understanding or concept of personality as an identity is the sum total of biological, psychological, and sociological factors underlying individual behaviour. Terminologically, national identity is a characteristic possessed by a nation that philosophically distinguishes it from other nations. Based on this understanding, every nation in the world has its own unique identity, nature, characteristics, and character, determined largely by the historical processes through which the nation formed. According to the essence of the understanding of "national identity", as explained, the national identity of a nation cannot be separated from its national essence or what is more popularly referred to as the personality of a nation.

Fundamentally, national identity is a manifestation of cultural values that grow and make it distinct from other nations. The national identity of Indonesia originates from the embodiment of the noble values of Pancasila in the life of society, nation, and state. Identity refers to symbols or national identities such as the Indonesian language, the national anthem "Indonesia Raya," the red and white flag, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," and the Garuda Pancasila. A sense of patriotism and national integration are crucially important to preserve national identity. One identity or characteristic the Indonesian nation possesses is its diverse nature (University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Education in Sombor, Serbia et al., 2023).

This diversity is a combination of elements that shape national identity. Ethnic groups are one of the elements that form national identity. Social groups that are specifically ascriptive or present since birth,

which are similarly colored with age and sex groups. In Indonesia specifically, there are many ethnic groups or ethnic groups with no less than three hundred language dialects. Religion is one of the elements that form national identity. The Indonesian people are known as a religious society (based on religious values). Religions that grow and develop in the archipelago are Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Culture is one of the elements that form national identity. Human knowledge as a social being whose contents are tools or knowledge models that are collectively used by supporters to interpret and understand the environment faced and used as a reference or guide to act (in the form of behavior and cultural objects) in accordance with the environment faced. Language is one of the elements that form national identity. In this case, language is understood as a system of symbols that are arbitrated by human speech sound elements and used as a means of interaction between humans.

Culture is human knowledge as a social creature, which consists of devices or models of knowledge collectively used by its supporters to interpret and understand the environment they face, and used as references or guidelines for actions (in the form of behaviors and cultural objects) in accordance with the environment they face. Language is another supporting element of national identity. Language is understood as a system of symbols arbitrarily formed from elements of human speech sounds and used as a means of interaction among humans. Identity refers to characteristics, distinctive qualities likened to an object thereby highlighting its uniqueness and making it comparable to other objects. Nationality originates from a culture that possesses national art, emphasizing the existence of a specific sociocultural community with shared values, goals, and objectives. National identity in Indonesia is an attribute or distinctive feature of the Indonesian nation that sets it apart from other nations in the world.

National identity begins with human identity and ends with national integration. The elements of Indonesian national identity include ethnicity, religion, culture, and language. Within these elements, there are three categories: the national flag, which is red and white; the Indonesian national language; the national emblem, Garuda Pancasila, and symbols of Pancasila; the national anthem, Indonesia Raya; the 1945 Constitution; and regional cultures. Human identity: Humans are multidimensional beings. Human multidimensional conditions, paradoxes, and, at the same time, uni pluralistic influence their existence. People are

influenced by these circumstances. They are also influenced by the values they represent as guidelines for their lives. Ultimately, what shapes a person's identity, both individually and collectively, is a combination of uniqueness with the realization present within them as the values they represent (Qoyyimah et al., 2023).

Awareness that Indonesia is a diverse nation is crucially important (Salmiarti et al., 2024). Without this awareness, diversity, which could be a potential for progress, might instead become a problem. Indonesia's diversity should not be seen in terms of differences but in terms of unity. This analogy can be illustrated as a human body consisting of a head, body, arms, and legs, although each organ is a complete unit of the human body. This is a perfect depiction of Indonesia's unity united by the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, meaning "unity in diversity." Despite our differences, we are one as the foundation for living together amidst diversity. The existence of Indonesia as a nation was not born overnight, but through a long process with various obstacles and challenges. The personality, identity, and national identity of Indonesia can be traced from the history of the formation of the Indonesian nation from the era of the Kutai kingdom, Srivijaya, and other kingdoms before colonialism and imperialism entered Indonesia. The values of Pancasila existed during that time, not just during the colonial or post-colonial era. The process of nationalism rooted in this culture, according to Mohammad Yamin, is termed the old nationalism phase. As a nation-state, these differences should be seen as a natural and necessary reality. It is necessary to build relational bridges that connect diversity to build the concept of unity in diversity. This is why Pancasila was born as a tool of connection. Diversity is a mosaic that beautifies the complete image of Indonesia. Ideally, all overlapping identities of different groups within a nation-state aim towards the most important aspiration, which is national identity.

3.2. *Indonesia's National Identity*

The Indonesian nation was formed through a rather lengthy historical process. Based on this objective reality, Indonesia's national identity and the nation's character cannot be separated from the cultural roots that support Indonesia's national identity. The personality, national identity, and philosophical influences on Indonesia's national identity must be followed and understood through Pancasila. Indonesia's history has been going on since the times of Kutai, Srivijaya, Majapahit, and

other kingdoms before foreign colonization (Harjatanaya & Hoon, 2020).

The process of nation and state formation in Indonesia was quite lengthy, starting from the kingdoms in the 4th and 5th centuries, and laid the foundations of Indonesian citizenship. The emergence began in the 7th century, during the birth of the Srivijaya Kingdom. During the Syailendra Dynasty in Palembang, followed by the Kingdoms of Airlangga and Majapahit in East Java and other kingdoms, the creative process of nationalism within this culture was referred to by Mohammad Yamin as the phase of old nationalism, and objectively serves as the basis for Indonesia's national identity.

Pancasila did not suddenly emerge, forced by the system, but evolved through a rather long narrative phase. Before being formally formulated in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution as the state philosophy, its values were already present in Indonesian daily life and attitudes. Therefore, the substance of Pancasila's values represents nothing but the Indonesian nation itself. In this sense, according to Notonagoro, the Indonesian nation is something materialistic. These values of Pancasila were then collected and formally formulated to become the foundational principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia by its founders (Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia et al., 2021).

The national foundation, symbolized by the unifying motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, is a shared agreement that unites the Indonesian nation. Hence, the national identity is the foundation of the state. As a sovereign state, Indonesia's cornerstone is Pancasila, guiding its goals and principles within the nation, forming the core of the Indonesian nation. In the context of societal and national life shaken by crises and abundant currents, Pancasila inevitably faces various tests, cynicism, and challenges to its credibility as the national foundation or even as an expression of the nation's identity. However, we must immediately understand that without a "platform" in the form of a state foundation or ideology, no country can survive in facing various challenges and threats following the rapid globalization spreading across the world (Yufriadi et al., 2023; Sakban & Sundawa, 2023).

The rapid pace of globalization today brings changes to most aspects of life. The advancements in science and technology, along with the flow of digitalization, undoubtedly impact the lifestyle and habits of society (Siswati et al., 2023; Fitri et al., 2024). The younger generation, as the future leaders

of the nation, should be prepared as early as possible to understand cultural values such as national identity. The mental condition of teenagers is in an unstable phase, making them highly susceptible to influence. Furthermore, the impacts of globalization will predominantly affect the younger generation, as they are continually accompanied by endless developments in their lifetime. Currently, many teenagers are fond of Western lifestyles and tend to prefer foreign cultures over their national culture. These adverse effects can certainly erode nationalism and lead to a crisis of national identity.

The negative impacts of globalization can be observed in several aspects of life. Firstly, in politics, globalization may lead to a transformation of Pancasila ideology into liberalism due to the declining sense of nationalism. Secondly, in economics, globalization diminishes the love and pride for local or domestic products due to the increasing distribution of imported products in Indonesia and foreign investments that can displace Indonesia's local economy. Thirdly, in culture, globalization influences cultural practices, allowing communities to imitate Western lifestyles and cultures, thereby diminishing Indonesia's local culture. Fourthly, in social aspects, globalization triggers the emergence of individualism, hedonism, and materialism, which can erode the unity of the nation (Sautereau & Faas, 2023).

A crisis of national identity is a condition of societal instability where national identity or national characteristics begin to fade, thereby threatening the unity of the nation. This can occur if we, as Indonesian citizens, fail to uphold and strengthen our national identity and pass it on to the younger generation. The younger generation, as the future bearers of national identity, must be prepared from an early age. Instilling national values, culture, and a love for the homeland is crucial because it profoundly impacts the continuity of Indonesia as a nation. The younger generation must learn to cherish their national identity (Morgan et al., 2021). Efforts must be made as effectively as possible, adapting to the currents of contemporary development.

3.3. *The role of civic education*

Civic education is one of the compulsory courses that must be provided to all students in higher education institutions. Legally, the designation of civic education as a compulsory general course in higher education is regulated by the National Education System Law (Law Number 20 of 2003) Article 37, paragraph 2, which states Higher

education curricula must include religious education, civic education, and language (Akkari & Maleq, 2020). Additionally, it is also mentioned in Law No. 12 of 2012 Article 35 Paragraph 5 regarding higher education that the curriculum must include Religious Education, Pancasila Education, civic education, and Indonesian Language. Based on the contents of these two laws, it is clear that civic education has legal legitimacy to be provided to every student in higher education institutions.

Civic education is expected to be central in instilling character and a love for the homeland. Love for the homeland begins with understanding the concept of national identity, which is expected to develop into a sense of ownership and pride in that national identity (Vural & Rustemli, 2006). The role of civic education is a crucial component in realizing national identity and integrity. As stated by several experts on civic education, Sumantri explains that values education is an important educational activity for children, adults, and adolescents, both within and outside schools. Furthermore, Winataputra, U. S., and Budimansyaah also state that "the position of civic education as values education is a clear sociocultural necessity and urgency for the sustainability of civilized life." Similarly, Kansil argues that "Civic education is a subject that serves as a means to develop and preserve noble values and morals rooted in Indonesian cultural values, which are expected to manifest in behaviour in daily life, both as individuals and as members of society and creatures created by God Almighty."

Based on the insights of these experts, it can be concluded that civic education at both the school and higher education levels plays a very important role in instilling and perpetuating noble values rooted in Indonesian culture, thereby manifesting in everyday behaviour. As previously discussed, these noble values of Indonesian society are encapsulated in the principles of Pancasila and are fundamental to Indonesia's identity. As stated by Wandani (2021), before the creation of Pancasila, these values were already practised by the community, as affirmed by Indonesia's first President, who described Pancasila as the result of the exploration of Indonesia's land, water, and earth. Hence, Pancasila aligns closely with the Indonesian national character. As part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, we must understand and be able to apply these values in community life, starting from the values of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and justice (Fitri et al., 2022; Novianti, 2022).

Furthermore, directly stated by Salsabila, the results of her research indicate that many still care about and support the importance of civic education at all levels of education, especially among the younger generation. It is hoped that civic education will strengthen national identity. This sentiment is reinforced by a source from 2010, which suggests that such skills and activities will strengthen public support for democratic institutions (Santoso, 2021). Civic education has the laudable goal of increasing political awareness and knowledge about a country's history, national identity, and political institutions. The intention of such education is to increase political literacy, competence, and participation under this assumption. In higher education civic education, there is a specific subject that discusses national identity. Nevertheless, the introduction and cultivation of a sense of pride and ownership towards the national identity of the Indonesian nation can also be integrated into several other subjects (Syahrani et al., 2024). Understanding and fostering pride in the national identity must involve meaningful learning experiences for the participants. Teachers and lecturers must design civic education in such a way that the goal of strengthening Indonesia's national identity can be achieved. According to a source from 2023, civic education provided to students can strengthen the nation's identity.

Equipping students with a deep understanding of national identity through engaging learning media is a strategic step that educators can take at the early education level. The selection of this approach is not merely to introduce the concept of national identity but also to instil a strong awareness of the importance of understanding and preserving national values in a broader context. In the initial stages of learning, educators can utilize various types of media, such as educational videos, multimedia presentations, and interactive online platforms, to visually and audibly depict key elements that shape Indonesia's national identity (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2019). This approach aims not only to convey information but also to stimulate students' interest and active participation in the learning process. In this way, students are not merely passive recipients of information but actively involved in exploring the material being taught. Educators can guide students to deeply explore various challenges faced by Indonesia in maintaining its national identity. Intensive discussions about factors influencing national identity, such as ethnic diversity, religion, culture, and language, are crucial in building a holistic

understanding. Students are encouraged to perceive this diversity not only as a fact but also to explore how diversity enriches the nation's identity.

As a final assignment in learning about national identity, students can be given the opportunity to apply their acquired knowledge by creating a video project (Fitriati & Rata, 2021). This project can focus on one aspect of national identity, such as regional cultural richness or the values of Pancasila, incorporating unique elements from their own region. Through creating these videos, students not only hone their creativity and technical skills but also demonstrate their ability to articulate national values in a format accessible to a wider audience (Farrell et al., 2022). Using social media as a platform to publish their work is an effective strategy to amplify the impact of this learning. Students not only contribute to building a positive narrative about national identity but also participate in educating and inspiring the broader society about Indonesia's cultural richness. This approach is not only academically relevant but also adds value in developing students' social skills and communication abilities in an increasingly interconnected digital world.

4. Conclusions

National identity is the national personality or national character possessed by a nation that distinguishes one nation from another. National identity in the context of a country is reflected in national symbols such as Pancasila. National identity is a complex and significant concept in the context of human society. Essentially, national identity is the manifestation of cultural values that grow and develop in the aspects of a nation's life. Elements of national identity include ethnicity, religion, culture, and language. The national identity of Indonesia includes Indonesian as the national language, the red and white flag, the national anthem Indonesia Raya, the national emblem Garuda Pancasila, the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Pancasila as the philosophical foundation of the state, the 1945 Constitution as the state constitution, the unitary state form of the Republic of Indonesia, the concept of archipelagic outlook, and regional cultures. This provides a theoretical foundation regarding civic education as a means to strengthen national identity. Indonesia is a country characterized by diversity and richness that makes it the distinctive identity of the Indonesian Nation. However, at present, this identity is beginning to be eroded by various influences.

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