



Empowering School Students through Civic Education to Cultivate a Sense of Responsibility as Citizens (Civic Responsibility)

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ABSTRAK

Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memberdayakan siswa melalui Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan dalam menumbuhkan sikap tanggung jawab sebagai warga negara (civic responsibility). Permasalahan yang dihadapi adalah rendahnya kesadaran siswa terhadap tanggung jawab sosial, kedisiplinan, dan partisipasi dalam kehidupan sekolah. Kegiatan dilaksanakan menggunakan pendekatan partisipatif melalui diskusi kelompok, simulasi, dan proyek aksi kewarganegaraan berbasis nilai-nilai Pancasila. Sasaran kegiatan adalah 32 siswa sekolah menengah yang dilibatkan secara aktif dalam mengidentifikasi masalah dan melaksanakan aksi nyata di lingkungan sekolah. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan civic responsibility siswa, ditandai dengan kenaikan skor rata-rata dari 62,15 (pretest) menjadi 82,40 (posttest) atau meningkat sebesar 32,6%. Selain itu, siswa menunjukkan perubahan sikap yang lebih disiplin, peduli, dan partisipatif dalam kehidupan sosial. Dengan demikian, pembelajaran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan yang kontekstual dan aplikatif efektif dalam memperkuat tanggung jawab siswa sebagai warga negara.

ABSTRACT

This community service activity aims to empower students through Civic Education in fostering an attitude of civic responsibility. The problem faced is the low awareness of students regarding social responsibility, discipline, and participation in school life. The activity was implemented using a participatory approach through group discussions, simulations, and civic action projects based on Pancasila values. The target of the activity was 32 high school students who were actively involved in identifying problems and carrying out real actions in the school environment. The results of the activity showed an increase in students' civic responsibility, marked by an increase in the average score from 62.15 (pretest) to 82.40 (posttest) or an increase of 32.6%. In addition, students showed a change in attitude towards being more disciplined, caring, and participatory in social life. Thus, contextual and applicable Civic Education learning is effective in strengthening students' responsibilities as citizens.

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INTRODUCTION

Social changes in the twenty-first century, characterized by globalization, rapid digital technological development, and increasing individualism, have created new challenges in the formation of responsible citizens. Young people today are confronted with various social problems, including declining social concern, reduced participation in democratic life, increasing intolerance, and weakening responsibility toward the social environment. These conditions indicate that education should not merely focus on the acquisition of knowledge but must also foster responsible and active citizenship. International studies have consistently demonstrated that citizenship education contributes significantly to the development of democratic attitudes, social participation, and civic behaviors among students.¹

In Indonesia, various phenomena such as violations of school regulations, low environmental awareness, increasing individualistic behavior, and limited student participation in social activities indicate that civic responsibility among students still needs to be strengthened. Civic responsibility is a fundamental dimension of good citizenship because it encompasses awareness of rights and obligations, concern for the common good, and the ability to participate democratically in solving social problems.² Developing civic responsibility among adolescents is therefore essential to preparing future citizens who are socially responsible and actively engaged in democratic society.

Civic Education has a strategic position in developing intelligent, democratic, and responsible citizens. Citizenship education not only promotes civic knowledge but also develops civic skills and civic dispositions that are essential for democratic participation.³ Previous studies have shown that contextual and participatory citizenship learning can increase students' civic engagement and foster social responsibility.⁴ Furthermore, democratic learning environments and project-based citizenship education have been proven effective in strengthening students' civic competencies and participatory behaviors.⁵

Nevertheless, previous studies indicate that the implementation of citizenship education remains predominantly oriented toward cognitive aspects and has not fully provided students with authentic

¹ M. M. Isac, R. Maslowski, and G. van der Werf, "Civic Knowledge and Civic Engagement among Adolescents: Evidence from International Studies," *Social Psychology of Education* 25, no. 3 (2022); J. Torney-Purta and C. Barber, "Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement among Adolescents in Changing Societies," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 11 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02877-0>; F. Reichert and M. Print, "Civic Participation of High School Students: The Effect of Civic Learning in School," *Educational Review* 70, no. 3 (2018).

² J. Westheimer and J. Kahne, "What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy," *American Educational Research Journal* 41, no. 2 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041002237>; Reichert and Print, "Civic Participation of High School Students: The Effect of Civic Learning in School."

³ B. Hoskins, J. G. Janmaat, and E. Villalba, "Learning Citizenship through Social Participation Outside and inside School," *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 5 (2021); Reichert and Print, "Civic Participation of High School Students: The Effect of Civic Learning in School"; Torney-Purta and Barber, "Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement among Adolescents in Changing Societies."

⁴ S. Manganelli, F. Lucidi, and F. Alivernini, "Adolescents' Expected Civic Participation: The Role of Civic Knowledge and Efficacy Beliefs," *Journal of Adolescence* 88 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2021.03.002>; R. T. Knowles, P. McAvoy, and D. Hess, "Teaching for Civic Engagement and Democratic Participation," *Journal of Social Science Education* 21, no. 2 (2022).

⁵ E. Sant et al., "Global Citizenship Education and Student Participation: A Systematic Review," *Educational Review* 75, no. 4 (2023).

opportunities to practice civic responsibility in real-life contexts. Systematic reviews on civic engagement programs through citizenship education also emphasize the need for experiential learning and action-oriented pedagogical models that connect civic knowledge with everyday civic practices.⁶

Furthermore, studies on civic responsibility in Indonesia have mainly been conducted in higher education settings or through conceptual analyses, while community service programs that integrate citizenship education with citizenship action projects at the school level remain relatively limited. This condition reveals a significant research gap between the normative goals of citizenship education and learning practices that effectively promote behavioral change and students' social responsibility.

Based on these considerations, a community service program is needed to empower students through contextual, participatory, and experiential citizenship education. The program is designed through group discussions, simulations, and citizenship action projects that encourage students to identify problems within their school environment and implement democratic and responsible solutions. Therefore, this community service activity aims to empower students through Citizenship Education to foster civic responsibility. The novelty of this program lies in integrating Citizenship Education with a Citizenship Action Project as a student empowerment strategy to develop discipline, social concern, and active participation in community life.

SERVICE METHOD

This community service activity employed a Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approach, which places students as the primary subjects in the learning and empowerment process. Participatory approaches are increasingly recognized as effective strategies for fostering student agency, collaborative problem-solving, and active citizenship because they provide opportunities for learners to identify social issues and implement collective actions within their communities.⁷ This approach was chosen because it enables students to actively participate in identifying citizenship issues, formulating solutions, and implementing concrete actions as a form of civic responsibility. The community service activity was conducted at Nurul Hasanah Private High School, Medan Tembung, North Sumatra, in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, involving 32 students as participants and six teachers as implementation support staff.

The implementation of the community service program began with a preparation phase through coordination with the school to determine the schedule and implementation mechanism. Subsequently, the community service team identified students' needs and challenges related to civic responsibility through observations and discussions with teachers and students. Participatory needs assessment has been

⁶ B. Blevins, K. LeCompte, and S. Wells, "Innovations in Civic Education: Developing Civic Agency through Action Civics," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 49, no. 4 (2021); G. M. Garcia-Albacete, "Young People's Political Participation and Citizenship Education," *Educational Research Review* 35 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100425>.

⁷ Sant et al., "Global Citizenship Education and Student Participation: A Systematic Review"; Blevins, LeCompte, and Wells, "Innovations in Civic Education: Developing Civic Agency through Action Civics."

recommended as an essential stage in educational empowerment programs because it encourages stakeholders' involvement and increases program effectiveness.⁸ Based on this identification, the team developed Citizenship Education materials focusing on strengthening responsibility, discipline, social awareness, and participation in community life.⁹

The implementation phase employed several participatory learning methods, namely counseling, group discussions, simulations, and citizenship action projects. Experiential and action-oriented learning approaches have been shown to promote civic competencies, democratic participation, and social responsibility among adolescents.¹⁰ Students were divided into groups to discuss various citizenship issues encountered in the school environment, such as discipline, cleanliness, and social awareness. The activities continued with simulations and case studies to improve students' democratic decision-making and problem-solving skills.

As a form of learning implementation, students carried out collaboratively designed citizenship action projects, such as school discipline movements, environmental cleanliness campaigns, and social awareness activities. Previous studies have demonstrated that citizenship action projects effectively promote civic engagement, social responsibility, and active participation among students.¹¹ During the project implementation, the community service team provided mentoring and monitoring to ensure active student involvement and reinforce civic responsibility values.

The activity was evaluated using a pretest-posttest design to measure improvements in students' understanding and attitudes toward civic responsibility before and after participating in the program.^{12,13} Pretest-posttest evaluation designs are widely employed in educational intervention studies Creswell because they allow researchers to identify changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors following participation in a program.^{14,15} The data obtained were analyzed descriptively by comparing pretest and posttest results and interpreting changes in students' attitudes based on indicators of discipline, social awareness, and active participation. The program's success was indicated by increased student understanding and responsibility as citizens and greater awareness of the importance of active participation in school and community life.

⁸ Guillermo Rodríguez-Abitia et al., "Cultural Differences in Complexity Reasoning in Higher Education," *International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality*, 2022.

⁹ Hotma Siregar and Vinna Dinda Kemala, "Citizenship Education as Legal Education in Schools," *EDUCTUM: Journal Research* 2, no. 1 (2023).

¹⁰ Garcia-Albacete, "Young People's Political Participation and Citizenship Education"; Knowles, McAvoy, and Hess, "Teaching for Civic Engagement and Democratic Participation."

¹¹ Blevins, LeCompte, and Wells, "Innovations in Civic Education: Developing Civic Agency through Action Civics"; Manganelli, Lucidi, and Alivernini, "Adolescents' Expected Civic Participation: The Role of Civic Knowledge and Efficacy Beliefs."

¹² H. Elfrianto, S. Pd, and Gusman Lesmana, *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan* (umsu press, 2022).

¹³ Indra Prasetya, *Metodologi Penelitian Pendekatan Teori Dan Praktik* (umsu press, 2022).

¹⁴ J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 6th ed. (Sage, 2023).

¹⁵ J. R. Fraenkel, N. E. Wallen, and H. H. Hyun, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*, 11th ed. (McGraw-Hill, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The community service activity entitled "Empowering Students through Citizenship Education to Foster Civic Responsibility" was implemented at Nurul Hasanah Private High School, Medan Tembung, North Sumatra, involving 32 students and six teachers as supporting facilitators. The activity was carried out through a Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approach, emphasizing active student involvement in every stage of learning and empowerment.

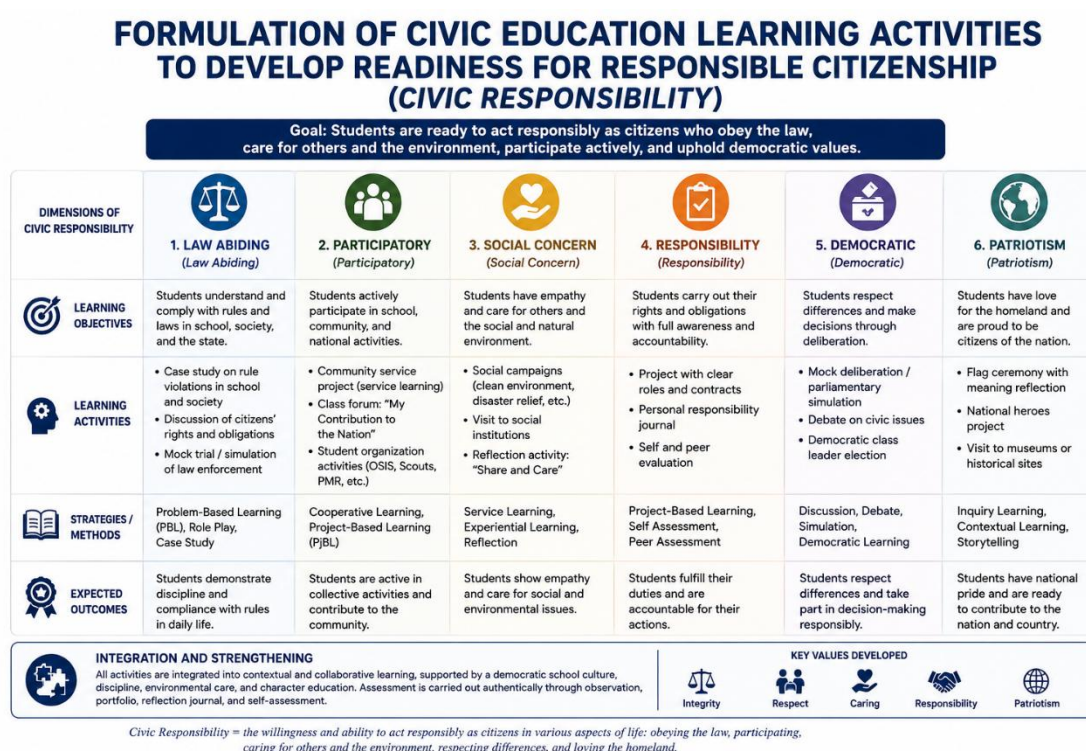


Figure 1. Diagram Research Activity

The implementation of the program began with a preliminary assessment through observations and discussions with teachers and students to identify problems related to students' civic responsibility. The findings indicated several issues, including low discipline in complying with school regulations, limited participation in social activities, and insufficient awareness of environmental cleanliness and collective responsibility within the school environment.

The next stage involved delivering Citizenship Education materials through counseling sessions and interactive discussions. The materials focused on the concepts of citizens' rights and obligations, democratic values, social responsibility, and the importance of active participation in community life. During this session, students demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm, as indicated by their active participation in asking questions and sharing experiences related to citizenship issues encountered in their daily lives. Following the counseling activities, students were divided into small groups to discuss various

civic issues within the school environment. Each group identified priority problems and proposed alternative solutions through deliberative discussions. The identified issues included classroom cleanliness, student discipline, and low participation in social and environmental activities. Through this process, students developed critical thinking skills, collaborative abilities, and democratic decision-making competencies.

As the core activity of the program, students implemented several Citizenship Action Projects, including: (1) a school discipline movement through peer monitoring and reminders regarding school rules; (2) an environmental cleanliness campaign by organizing class cleaning schedules and waste management activities; and (3) social awareness activities through charity programs and collaborative initiatives to help peers experiencing difficulties. These projects provided students with direct experiences in practicing civic responsibility and encouraged them to become active agents of change within their school community.

The community service program involved 32 students and was evaluated using a pretest-posttest design. The findings revealed a significant increase in students' civic responsibility after participating in contextual and action-based Citizenship Education activities. The average civic responsibility score increased from 62.15 in the pretest to 82.40 in the posttest, representing an improvement of 32.6%.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Civic Responsibility Scores

Variable	N	Mean	Increase (%)
Pretest	32	62.15	-
Posttest	32	82.40	32.6

The findings indicate that the program effectively strengthened students' understanding and attitudes toward responsible citizenship.

Before the program, many students showed limited compliance with school regulations, such as arriving late, neglecting classroom duties, and showing low awareness of school discipline. After participating in case studies, discussions on citizens' rights and obligations, and simulations of law enforcement, students demonstrated better compliance with school rules and a greater awareness of the importance of obeying regulations in daily life. Students initially exhibited low involvement in collective activities and limited participation in school programs. Through group discussions and citizenship action projects, students became more active in organizing environmental campaigns, participating in classroom activities, and contributing to community service initiatives. This finding indicates an increase in students' willingness to participate in collective activities and contribute to the school community. One of the most visible changes occurred in students' social awareness. Prior to the program, students showed relatively low concern for environmental cleanliness and social problems around them. Following the implementation of social campaigns and collaborative projects, students demonstrated greater empathy, concern for others, and willingness to engage in social activities. The project-based activities encouraged students to take responsibility for assigned tasks and complete collective projects. Students became more accountable for

their actions, fulfilled their duties on time, and demonstrated greater commitment to maintaining school discipline and cleanliness. Students' democratic attitudes improved through deliberation activities, group decision-making, and simulations of democratic processes. Students became more willing to listen to differing opinions, respect diversity, and participate in collective decision-making processes. The program also strengthened students' sense of patriotism and national identity. Through discussions on national values and reflection activities, students developed greater pride in being Indonesian citizens and demonstrated increased willingness to contribute positively to their school and community.

Table 2. Improvement in Civic Responsibility Dimensions

Dimension	Before Program (%)	After Program (%)	Category
Law Abiding	62	86	High
Participatory	58	82	High
Social Concern	57	84	High
Responsibility	60	85	High
Democratic	59	81	High
Patriotism	63	87	High

Discussion

The findings of this community service program demonstrate that contextual and participatory Citizenship Education significantly improves students' civic responsibility across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The average civic responsibility score increased by 32.6%, indicating that experiential and action-oriented learning activities are effective in fostering responsible citizenship among students. This result supports the argument that civic responsibility is best developed through active participation rather than through the transmission of theoretical knowledge alone.

The significant improvement in students' law-abiding behavior, responsibility, and patriotism aligns with previous studies emphasizing the effectiveness of experiential civic learning. Research by Kahne and Sporte found that students who participate in civic-oriented learning experiences demonstrate higher levels of civic commitment, political efficacy, and social responsibility than those who only receive conventional classroom instruction.¹⁶ Similarly, Torney and Purta reported that participatory civic education positively influences students' civic knowledge, democratic values, and willingness to engage in community activities.¹⁷ The present findings reinforce these conclusions by showing that direct involvement in Citizenship Action Projects can effectively translate civic concepts into actual behavior.

¹⁶ Joseph Kahne and Susan E. Sporte, "Developing Citizens: The Impact of Civic Learning Opportunities on Students' Commitment to Civic Participation," *American Educational Research Journal* 45, no. 3 (2008): 738–66, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831208316951>.

¹⁷ Torney-Purta and Barber, "Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement among Adolescents in Changing Societies."

The increase in participatory attitudes and social concern observed in this program is also consistent with studies highlighting the role of project-based civic education. Research by Hoskins and Janmaat revealed that active learning approaches, including community projects and collaborative activities, significantly contribute to the development of civic engagement and social cohesion among adolescents.¹⁸ Likewise, Reichert argued that students become more responsible and socially engaged when schools provide opportunities to participate in collective decision-making and community-based activities.¹⁹ The environmental campaigns and social service projects implemented in this program provided authentic contexts in which students could practice cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility.

The findings further support the theoretical perspective of experiential learning proposed by Kolb, which suggests that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively experience, reflect, conceptualize, and apply knowledge in real-life situations.²⁰ Through peer monitoring activities, environmental campaigns, and social initiatives, students were encouraged to identify problems, formulate solutions, and take concrete action. Consequently, civic values were not merely understood conceptually but became internalized through repeated practice and reflection.

The improvement in democratic attitudes is also in line with the findings of Campbell, who concluded that schools functioning as democratic communities significantly influence students' civic dispositions and participatory behaviors.²¹ The deliberation activities and collaborative decision-making processes conducted during the program allowed students to experience democratic practices directly, thereby strengthening their respect for diversity and collective responsibility. These findings indicate that democratic competencies are more effectively developed through participatory experiences than through traditional teacher-centered instruction.

Furthermore, the enhancement of patriotism and national identity confirms previous research suggesting that Citizenship Education contributes significantly to strengthening national attachment and civic identity. Isac et al. found that students who frequently participate in civic-related activities exhibit stronger national identity and a greater sense of responsibility toward society.²² In the Indonesian context, discussions on national values and reflections on students' roles as citizens helped strengthen their sense of belonging and commitment to contributing positively to their communities.

Compared with previous studies, this community service program offers an important practical contribution by integrating contextual Citizenship Education with Citizenship Action Projects implemented

¹⁸ Bryony Hoskins and Jan Germen Janmaat, *Education, Democracy and Inequality* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73963-2>.

¹⁹ F. Reichert, "Educating for Active and Responsible Citizenship: The Role of Civic Education," *Educational Review* 73, no. 2 (2021).

²⁰ Kolb Da, "Experiential Learning," *Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* 41 (1984).

²¹ David E. Campbell, "Voice in the Classroom: How an Open Classroom Climate Fosters Political Engagement Among Adolescents," *Political Behavior* 30, no. 4 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-008-9063-z>.

²² Maria Magdalena Isac et al., "The Contribution of Schooling to Secondary-School Students' Citizenship Outcomes Across Countries," *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 25, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2012.751035>.

directly within the school environment. While earlier studies generally focused on measuring civic knowledge or democratic attitudes, this program demonstrates that action-based and participatory approaches can simultaneously improve multiple dimensions of civic responsibility, including law-abiding behavior, social concern, responsibility, participation, democratic attitudes, and patriotism. Therefore, the findings suggest that Citizenship Education should move beyond theoretical instruction and provide authentic opportunities for students to practice citizenship in their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrates that contextual and participatory Citizenship Education effectively strengthens students' civic responsibility. Through the implementation of Citizenship Action Projects, students were provided with authentic opportunities to practice civic values directly in their school environment, including discipline movements, environmental campaigns, and social awareness activities. Improvements occurred across all dimensions of civic responsibility, namely law-abiding behavior, participation, social concern, responsibility, democratic attitudes, and patriotism. These results indicate that experiential and action-based learning approaches enable students not only to understand citizenship concepts but also to internalize and apply them in everyday life. This program contributes practically by demonstrating that Citizenship Education should move beyond theoretical instruction and incorporate participatory, contextual, and project-based activities that encourage students to become active and responsible citizens. Therefore, schools are encouraged to integrate Citizenship Action Projects into regular learning activities as a sustainable strategy for developing students' civic responsibility and strengthening democratic citizenship competencies. Despite its positive outcomes, this program was implemented on a limited scale involving only one group of students and a relatively short intervention period. Future community service programs and studies are recommended to involve larger samples, longer implementation periods, and more diverse educational settings to examine the sustainability and broader impact of action-based Citizenship Education programs on students' civic development.

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