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INTERNALIZATION OF NATIONAL CHARACTER VALUES THROUGH CIVICS EDUCATION: A STUDENT PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe students' experiences in internalizing national character values through Civic Education courses and to analyze the extent of their implementation in campus life. This research employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method to explore students' lived experiences. The participants consisted of six second-semester students enrolled in the Civic Education course at STABN Sriwijaya Tangerang. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, while data analysis followed Creswell's phenomenological model. The results indicate that students internalize various national character values, including religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, independence, democratic attitudes, and responsibility. These values are reflected in both academic and social activities, although the level of implementation varies among individuals. The findings also reveal that the role of lecturers, learning environment, and instructional strategies significantly influence the internalization process. Furthermore, Civic Education courses play a strategic role in shaping students' character as responsible and active citizens. However, the inconsistency in value implementation suggests the need for more systematic and practice-based learning approaches.

Keywords: civic education; national character values; character education; students

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the character of a nation, as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the holistic development of students' potential. Education is not only oriented toward cognitive aspects but also encompasses affective and psychomotor dimensions. In this regard, character education has become a central focus in the Indonesian education system. The strengthening of character education is further emphasized through Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning the Strengthening of Character Education, which aims to develop a generation that is morally upright, cultured, and civilized based on the values of Pancasila.

In the context of higher education, universities have a strategic role in internalizing national character values among students. As institutions that produce intellectuals and future leaders, universities are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to cultivate ethical values and national identity. One of the primary instruments for achieving this objective is the Civic Education course. Civic Education is a field of study that focuses on developing students into responsible citizens who understand and are able to exercise their rights and obligations as intelligent, skilled, and character-driven individuals in accordance with the principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

To understand Civic Education comprehensively, it is necessary to examine its multidimensional nature, including its philosophical, sociological, and pedagogical aspects. As both a subject in schools and a course in higher education, Civic Education has undergone dynamic changes in terms of content, approach, and delivery methods (Dewantara et al., 2021). These transformations reflect the need for Civic Education to remain relevant in responding to rapid social, political, and cultural developments.

However, despite its strategic role, the implementation of national character values among students remains a significant challenge. The influence of globalization, technological advancement, and the influx of foreign cultural values have contributed to shifts in students' attitudes and behaviors. In many cases, these changes may weaken national identity and reduce awareness of civic responsibility. Therefore, systematic and continuous efforts are required to strengthen national character through effective educational practices.

In the learning process of Civic Education, students are not only introduced to the concept of patriotism but are also encouraged to develop a sense of nationalism and love for the homeland within the context of social, national, and state life. Character education, in this sense, is a continuous process of moral value formation through habituation and exemplary behavior. Lickona (2013) emphasizes that character consists of three interrelated components, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior, which together shape an individual's ethical conduct.

Furthermore, Civic Education aims to develop citizens who are not only intellectually competent but also possess strong moral character. Bakry (2009) argues that Civic Education plays a crucial role in instilling national values and fostering social responsibility among students. In line with this, the Ministry of National Education (2011) identified 18 core character values, including religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, and responsibility, which should be internalized in everyday life. These values serve as the foundation for building national character rooted in Pancasila and Indonesian cultural identity.

In addition, the urgency of character education has become more prominent in the digital era, where students are exposed to vast amounts of information and diverse cultural influences. Without adequate character reinforcement, students may face difficulties in filtering information and maintaining their national identity. Therefore, Civic Education must be designed not only as a theoretical subject but also as a transformative learning process that integrates knowledge, values, and real-life practice.

Despite numerous studies highlighting the importance of Civic Education in character building, there is still limited research that explores students' lived experiences in internalizing national character values, particularly through a phenomenological approach. Most previous studies tend to focus on curriculum analysis or learning outcomes rather than on how students experience and interpret these values in their daily lives.

Based on this gap, this study aims to explore students' experiences in internalizing national character values through Civic Education and to analyze how these values are implemented in campus life. By employing a phenomenological approach, this research is expected to provide a

deeper understanding of the process of character formation among students and contribute to the development of more effective Civic Education practices in higher education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences in internalizing national character values through the Civic Education course. The phenomenological approach is particularly suitable for exploring how individuals perceive, interpret, and construct meaning from their experiences in a specific context (Creswell, 2007).

The participants of this study were second-semester students enrolled in the Civic Education course at STABN Sriwijaya Tangerang. A total of six students were selected as research participants using purposive sampling. The selection criteria included active participation in the learning process and the ability to articulate their experiences related to the internalization of national character values. This approach ensured that the data obtained were rich, relevant, and aligned with the research objectives.

Data collection was carried out using multiple techniques, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to directly examine students' behaviors, interactions, and activities in both academic and social contexts. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore students' subjective experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding the internalization and implementation of national character values. Documentation was used to complement the data, including written records, academic materials, and other relevant documents. The use of multiple data collection techniques also enhances the credibility of the data through triangulation (Creswell, 2007).

Data analysis in this study followed the phenomenological analysis model proposed by Creswell (2007), which consists of several stages: data managing, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting, and representing. The analysis process was conducted systematically and iteratively, starting from data collection to the drawing of conclusions, allowing for a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied validation strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. These techniques were used to enhance the credibility and accuracy of the research findings (Creswell, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study are based on data collected from six second-semester students enrolled in the Civic Education course at STABN Sriwijaya Tangerang. The results indicate that Civic Education learning in higher education plays a significant role in developing students' knowledge, skills, and national character. The participants generally perceived that effective Civic Education learning is not merely focused on the transfer of knowledge but also emphasizes the formation of attitudes and values through an integrated learning process. This suggests that Civic Education contributes to both cognitive and affective domains of student development.

The findings further reveal that the implementation of national character values in Civic Education learning is influenced by several factors, including the role of lecturers, student characteristics, learning climate, instructional materials, and learning media. Among these factors, the role of lecturers emerged as particularly significant. Participants highlighted that lecturers who are able to create a conducive, interactive, and engaging learning environment tend to facilitate better internalization of values. In this context, lecturers function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators and role models.

In terms of learning content, Civic Education materials cover various fundamental aspects, including national identity, national integration, Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, democracy, the rule of law, citizens' rights and obligations, national resilience, and national defense. These materials provide a conceptual foundation for students in understanding and developing national character in a comprehensive manner.

The findings also show that the implementation of national character values among students is reflected in various attitudes and behaviors, which align with the 18 character values proposed by the Ministry of National Education (2011). Among the most dominant values identified by participants are religiosity, honesty, discipline, tolerance, and social concern. Religious values are demonstrated

through the practice of worship and respect for religious diversity. Honesty is reflected in students' commitment to academic integrity, such as avoiding cheating. Discipline is evident in punctuality and adherence to academic responsibilities, while tolerance is shown through respect for differences among peers. Social concern is manifested in students' willingness to help others within the campus environment.

Furthermore, the implementation of these values occurs not only in academic settings but also in social activities and daily interactions among students. This indicates that the internalization of national character values extends beyond classroom learning and is reinforced through real-life experiences in the campus environment.

However, the findings also indicate that the level of implementation of national character values varies among participants. Some students demonstrate strong commitment to applying these values, while others show more limited consistency. This variation is influenced by factors such as individual awareness, peer environment, and the consistency of value habituation. These findings suggest that although Civic Education plays a strategic role in character formation, more systematic and sustainable efforts are required to strengthen the internalization and consistent application of national character values among students.

Discussion

The formation of national character through education constitutes an integral part of the national education system, as mandated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Furthermore, the strengthening of character education is reinforced through Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 and Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 20 of 2018, both of which emphasize the importance of integrating character values into all aspects of the educational process. This indicates that education functions not only as a medium for knowledge transfer but also as a comprehensive process for shaping students' character (Al-Fikri, 2022).

In the context of higher education, Civic Education plays a strategic role in internalizing national character values among students. This aligns with Bakry (2009), who argues that Civic Education aims to develop citizens who are aware of their rights and obligations and possess strong social responsibility in national and civic life. Similarly, Dharmawan (2014) emphasizes that character education from a national perspective represents a systematic effort to instill moral values derived from Pancasila and the cultural foundations of the nation.

The findings of this study indicate that key national character values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, tolerance, and social concern have been internalized by students, although with varying levels of consistency. These findings are consistent with Lickona's (2013) framework, which conceptualizes character as comprising three interconnected components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior. The integration of these components is essential in shaping individuals' ethical conduct in daily life (Manurung et al., 2023).

Moreover, the Ministry of National Education (2011) identified 18 core character values that should be developed within the educational process, forming the foundation of national character building. The present study demonstrates that the implementation of these values is reflected in both academic and social activities of students. This suggests that the internalization of character values extends beyond classroom instruction and is reinforced through social interactions within the campus environment. This finding is further supported by Mulyasa (2011), who states that the success of character education largely depends on habituation and exemplary practices within educational settings (Murtiningsih et al., 2024).

In the current era of globalization and digitalization, the challenges associated with strengthening national character have become increasingly complex. Maryam (2023) highlights that the urgency of character education among students is growing due to the rapid development of technology and the global flow of information, both of which can significantly influence individual values and behavior. Therefore, Civic Education must continuously adapt to contemporary developments to remain relevant and effective in shaping students' character.

Additionally, research conducted by Dewantara et al. (2021) demonstrates that character education, including anti-corruption education, plays a crucial role in developing students with humanistic and law-abiding characteristics. This supports the present study's finding that Civic Education should not be viewed merely as a theoretical subject but rather as a transformative

learning process that shapes students' attitudes and behaviors in accordance with national values (Muhsinin et al., 2023).

However, this study also reveals that the implementation of national character values among students is not evenly distributed. Variations in implementation are influenced by factors such as individual awareness, social environment, and the consistency of value habituation. This finding is consistent with Tarigan et al. (2025), who argue that the successful implementation of character education strengthening requires support from an integrated system involving both educational institutions and the broader social environment.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Civic Education holds a strategic role in the internalization of national character values among students. Nevertheless, more systematic, contextual, and sustainable efforts are required to ensure that the implementation of these values can be carried out optimally in students' daily lives.

CONCLUSION

Civic Education plays a strategic role in internalizing Pancasila values through the implementation of national character values in higher education. As a compulsory course, Civic Education serves not only as a medium for knowledge transfer but also as a foundation for shaping students' character in a comprehensive manner. The findings of this study indicate that students are generally able to implement national character values in their daily academic and social lives. However, the level of implementation varies among individuals, highlighting the need for more consistent and systematic efforts in strengthening character education. Therefore, it is necessary to develop innovative learning approaches in Civic Education, particularly practice-based methods such as project-based learning. Such approaches are expected to enhance the internalization of national character values and contribute to the development of a campus culture that supports the realization of strong national character among students in higher education.

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