

Strengthening National Identity Through Civic Education in Grade V Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

National identity is a fundamental pillar that needs to be instilled in the younger generation from an early age. This study aimed to describe efforts to strengthen national identity through Civics Education (PKn) for fifth-grade elementary school students. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research involved 2 PKn teachers and 30 Grade V students at one elementary school in Pekanbaru, Riau, selected through purposive sampling based on criteria including active involvement in PKn learning and willingness to participate in the study. Data were collected through classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with source and method triangulation to ensure validity. The findings reveal three key strategies for strengthening national identity: (1) integration of national values (Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, and NKRI) into PKn learning content through interactive discussions, storytelling, and contextual case studies; (2) nationally-oriented school habituation through flag ceremonies, national anthem singing, and national literacy programs; and (3) student activity-based projects such as patriotic posters, hero narratives, and deliberation simulations. These strategies work synergistically to internalize national values across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. In conclusion, PKn is effective as a vehicle for building national character in elementary school students, equipping them with the values and civic awareness needed to become responsible, patriotic, and globally competent citizens.

1. INTRODUCTION

National identity is the primary foundation that distinguishes one nation from another through unique symbols and values embedded in culture, history, and the state system. For Indonesia, national identity is reflected in Pancasila as the state foundation, the 1945 Constitution as the constitutional basis, the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) as the embodiment of national unity. In an era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the sustainability of national resilience values has become critically important, especially for the younger generation who are increasingly exposed to foreign cultures through digital media. According to Wulandari (2021), technology serves as an important medium for preserving noble values and national culture, rather than being a component that erodes national identity (Idris et al., 2024). To maintain cultural continuity and national integrity in a digital era full of disruption, strengthening national identity is an absolute necessity. Furthermore, Marhayati (2021) emphasizes the importance of revitalizing civic and Pancasila education to strengthen national identity by enhancing school curricula that emphasize character learning, understanding national history, and Pancasila principles. Previous research on civic education and national identity has made significant contributions. Azzahra, Nawry, and Nelwati (2022) examined the role of PKn in constructing national identity, while Dwijayanti, Sanjaya, and Suastika (2025) explored character education integration in PKn.

However, these studies have not adequately addressed the specific mechanisms through which national identity is internalized in elementary school students at the Grade V level, nor have they examined the combined effect of classroom instruction, school habituation, and project-based activities as an integrated system. Furthermore, limited research has focused on the context of elementary schools in Riau province, where multicultural dynamics present unique challenges and opportunities for national identity education. This research fills that gap by investigating the specific strategies employed by PKn teachers in Grade V and their effectiveness in strengthening students' national identity through an integrative approach. For strategic purposes, Civics Education (PKn) serves as the primary vehicle for internalizing moral principles from an early age. In addition to providing knowledge about the rights and obligations of citizens, PKn fosters a sense of nationalism, tolerance for differences, and a spirit of unity. The challenges of globalization demand the strengthening of identity through synergistic education and policy. Multicultural education based on local wisdom is also an effective strategy for cultivating pride, nationalism, and tolerance in the younger generation (Dewi & Handayani, 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2022). The specific contribution of this research lies in its holistic documentation of three interconnected strategies — content integration, school habituation, and student projects — and their combined role in shaping the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of national identity in young learners. It is hoped that with a strong sense of nationalism, children will become pillars of the nation not only intellectually capable but also possessing character and integrity as responsible citizens.

2. METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at describing in depth and systematically the phenomena occurring related to the strengthening of national identity through Civics Education in Grade V elementary school students. This approach was chosen because it is capable of providing a comprehensive picture of the learning process, attitudes, and experiences of the research subjects in a natural context without variable manipulation. The subjects of this research consisted of 2 PKn teachers and 30 Grade V elementary school students at one elementary school in Pekanbaru, Riau. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) actively teaching or studying PKn at the Grade V level; (2) having at least one year of involvement in PKn learning activities; and (3) willingness to participate in the research process. Data collection techniques were carried out through classroom observation to directly observe the learning process, in-depth interviews with teachers and students to explore their views, experiences, and attitudes, as well as documentation related to teaching materials and PKn learning activities. The research procedure was carried out in five sequential stages. The first stage involved the determination of the research location and subjects, in which one elementary school in Pekanbaru, Riau was selected along with 2 PKn teachers and 30 Grade V students as research participants. The second stage consisted of data collection using three techniques: classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of teaching materials and learning activities. The third stage involved data analysis following the Miles and Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The fourth stage applied triangulation to ensure data validity, using both source triangulation (comparing data from teachers and students) and method triangulation (cross-checking findings across observation, interview, and documentation). The fifth and final stage involved drawing conclusions and formulating research findings based on the verified and analyzed data. Data analysis followed the Miles & Huberman model, consisting of three main stages: data reduction (selection, focusing, simplification, and transformation of collected data into more organized and understandable data), data presentation (arrangement of information in narrative, tabular, graphical, or matrix form), and conclusion drawing and verification (interpreting the meaning of the presented data to produce research findings). To ensure data validity, this research

used source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from PKn teachers and students, while method triangulation involved the use of observation, interviews, and documentation to enhance the validity and reliability of the research results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The results of this research indicate that Civics Education (PKn) is effective in instilling national identity in Grade V elementary school students through an integrative and activity-based learning approach. Teaching that combines discussion, storytelling, and case studies brings national identity values to life and makes them easier for students to understand. In addition, consistent school habituation such as flag ceremonies and national literacy programs play an important role in shaping stable attitudes in students, instilling discipline, a sense of responsibility, and appreciation for the nation's history and culture. Student projects make a significant contribution to deepening understanding and appreciation of national values through creative expression and direct experience. Through these activities, students do not merely gain knowledge, but also develop attitudes and social skills that reflect humanistic values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), democracy, and love of the homeland.

Table 1 Framework of National Identity Strengthening Through PKn

Strengthening National Identity Through Civics Education (Pkn) In Grade V Elementary School			
Strategy 1: Integration of National Values in PKn Content	Strategy 2: Nationally-Oriented School Habituation	Strategy 3: Student Activity-Based Projects	Identity Formation Mechanism
Pancasila, Constitution, NKRI, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Interactive discussions National hero storytelling Contextual case studies	Monday flag ceremony Indonesia Raya anthem National holiday commemorations National literacy programs	Patriotic posters National hero narratives Deliberation simulations Creative expression projects	Cognitive → Affective → Psychomotor (Knowledge → Attitude → National Civic Behavior)
OUTCOME: Students develop strong national character, equipped with a solid national identity to face the challenges of globalization			

Overall, PKn serves as a bulwark in strengthening the national identity of the younger generation, particularly in facing the challenges of globalization that bring various foreign cultural influences. This experience-based and habituation-centered education becomes an effective mechanism for preserving and nurturing national identity from an early age, so that students can grow into citizens who are aware of their responsibilities and proud of Indonesia.

DISCUSSION

Integration of National Identity Values in PKn Content

The results of this research indicate that Civics Education (PKn) is effective in instilling national identity in Grade V elementary school students through an integrative and activity-based learning approach. PKn teachers systematically integrate core national identity values Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, and NKRI into their learning activities through a variety of active and engaging methods. Rather than presenting these values as abstract concepts, teachers bring them to life through interactive discussions, storytelling about national heroes, and contextual case studies drawn from real-life situations familiar to students. This approach enables students not only to understand the theoretical foundations of nationhood but also to internalize and apply national values meaningfully in their everyday lives. This finding is consistent with Azzahra, Nawry, and Nelwati (2022), who argue that Civics Education serves as a primary medium for constructing national identity, particularly when learning is designed to be participatory and value-driven. Similarly, Dwijayanti, Sanjaya, and Suastika (2025) emphasize that the integration of character education into PKn learning is crucial for embedding national identity and national integration values in elementary school students. The active learning strategies observed in this study including discussion, narrative, and case-based approaches reflect a pedagogical model that addresses both cognitive understanding and affective development, ensuring that students not only know national values but genuinely feel connected to them. From a theoretical perspective, this strategy aligns with Lickona's (1991) character education model, which posits that effective character development requires engagement at the levels of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The integrative PKn learning observed in this study engages all three levels: students acquire knowledge of national values (knowing), develop an emotional connection to their national identity (feeling), and demonstrate civic behaviors in daily interactions (action). Furthermore, Dewi and Handayani (2021) argue that contextual value integration in civic education significantly enhances students' sense of national belonging, particularly when national symbols and historical narratives are presented in ways that resonate with students' lived experiences. Furthermore, Damayanti, Youanda, and Utami (2024) note that instilling a spirit of nationalism through PKn in elementary schools requires learning designs that are contextual, creative, and anchored in students' daily experiences. The findings of this research support this view, demonstrating that when teachers contextualize national values within familiar social situations, students are more likely to internalize those values deeply and apply them in their interactions with peers, family, and community.

Nationally-Oriented School Habituation

In addition to classroom instruction, the school environment plays a pivotal role in continuously reinforcing national values through structured habituation activities. The research findings reveal that schools consistently implement a range of nationalism-oriented routines, including the Monday flag ceremony, the singing of national anthems such as "Indonesia Raya," the commemoration of national holidays, and national literacy programs. These activities are not merely performed as administrative requirements; rather, they are deliberately designed as reflective and meaningful experiences that shape students' character over time. The flag ceremony, in particular, was observed to function as a powerful moment of collective reflection, instilling discipline, responsibility, and a sense of national pride in students on a regular basis. National literacy programs further extend students' awareness and appreciation of their cultural heritage, fostering a love of the homeland that goes beyond the classroom. This is in line with Mumpuni and Muhibbin (2025), who found that the strengthening of national character in Grade V elementary school students is significantly supported by the consistency and intentionality of school habituation practices

embedded in the daily school culture. The effectiveness of school habituation in shaping national identity can be explained through the lens of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which posits that behaviors are learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social environments. Regular participation in nationally-oriented rituals provides students with repeated exposure to behaviors that embody national values discipline through the flag ceremony, cultural pride through national anthem singing, and historical awareness through holiday commemorations. Over time, these repeated experiences become internalized as part of students' identity, transforming external behavioral conformity into genuine national character (Wuryandani et al., 2023). Idris et al. (2024) also highlight that in an era marked by rapid digital disruption, the reinforcement of national identity through school-based routines and structured habituation is essential for safeguarding the cultural continuity of the nation. The habituations observed in this study serve as a sustained and environmentally embedded mechanism for nurturing national values, ensuring that students are exposed to and reminded of their national identity not only through formal lessons but also through the lived culture of their school community.

Student Activity-Based Projects

The third strategy identified in this research involves the implementation of student activity-based projects that provide creative and experiential opportunities for students to express and deepen their understanding of national identity. Students were observed engaging in a variety of projects, including making posters on the theme of love of the homeland, writing stories about national heroes, and conducting classroom deliberation simulations (*musyawarah*) that model the democratic and consensus-based values characteristic of Indonesian civic culture. These project-based activities were found to make a significant contribution to deepening students' appreciation for national values through direct, hands-on experience. The effectiveness of project-based learning in strengthening national identity can be understood through constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which holds that meaningful learning occurs when students actively construct knowledge through social interaction and engagement with authentic tasks. When students create a patriotic poster or simulate a democratic deliberation, they are not merely applying pre-existing knowledge but actively constructing their understanding of what it means to be Indonesian a process that is both cognitively engaging and emotionally resonant. Moreover, the social nature of these projects working collaboratively, deliberating, and presenting to peers mirrors the civic practices of democratic citizenship. Sari and Wibowo (2020) similarly argue that project-based and experiential approaches in PKn strengthen national character by enabling students to practice civic values in concrete and relatable contexts. Rahmawati et al. (2022) further found that creative projects related to national themes significantly increased students' sense of national pride and cultural ownership, particularly when students had freedom to express their understanding through their own creative choices.

The challenge of implementing project-based PKn in the digital era, however, should not be overlooked. As noted by Supriatna and Fahmi (2023), teachers must adapt project designs to remain relevant and engaging for digitally-native students, potentially incorporating digital tools and media into national identity projects. The integration of digital storytelling, online collaboration, and multimedia presentations into PKn projects represents a promising direction for making national identity education more compelling and impactful for the current generation of elementary school students. Overall, the three strategies identified in this research value integration in learning content, nationally-oriented school habituation, and student activity-based projects work synergistically to form a comprehensive and holistic framework for national identity education. PKn, when implemented through these integrative approaches, serves as a powerful bulwark against the erosion of national identity in the face of globalization, equipping students with the values, character, and

civic awareness necessary to grow into responsible, patriotic, and globally competent citizens of Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that Civics Education (PKn) plays a highly significant and strategic role in strengthening the national identity of Grade V elementary school students. The implementation of PKn through three main strategies the integration of national identity values into learning content, consistent school habituation activities such as flag ceremonies, national anthem singing, and national literacy programs, as well as student activity-based projects such as creating patriotic posters and conducting democratic deliberation simulations has been shown to be effective in instilling national values in an integrative and sustainable manner. These strategies complement and reinforce one another, creating a comprehensive learning environment that supports the formation of students' national character across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. PKn has therefore proven to be an effective vehicle for building national character from elementary school age, serving as a strong bulwark against the cultural influences of globalization and nurturing a generation that is deeply rooted in national values while remaining open and adaptive to the demands of the modern world. This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted at a single elementary school in Pekanbaru, Riau, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the descriptive qualitative approach, while providing rich contextual insights, does not allow for causal claims about the effectiveness of the identified strategies. Third, the study did not measure long-term outcomes of the national identity strengthening strategies, focusing instead on observable behaviors and expressed attitudes during the research period. The implications of this research are threefold. Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on civic education and national identity by providing an empirically grounded framework for understanding how PKn functions as a vehicle for character formation. Practically, the three strategies identified offer a replicable model for PKn teachers to design more effective national identity education. For policy, the findings suggest that educational policymakers should support the integration of habituation programs and project-based learning into the formal PKn curriculum, particularly at the elementary school level. For future research, it is recommended to (1) conduct comparative studies across multiple schools and regions to assess the generalizability of these findings; (2) explore the development of digital project-based PKn models that are more relevant to the technological era; (3) conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of these strategies on students' national identity as they progress through higher levels of education; and (4) investigate the role of family and community factors in reinforcing or undermining the national identity formation achieved through PKn learning at school.

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