

ENHANCING CIVIC COMPETENCE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION THROUGH AN INNOVATIVE CIVIC LEARNING MODEL

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of an innovative civic learning model in enhancing civic competence among primary school students. Civic competence, encompassing knowledge, skills, and dispositions, is essential for preparing students to become active and responsible citizens in the 21st century. A quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group was employed, involving 40 students divided into an experimental group (n = 20) and a control group (n = 20). Data were collected through pre-test and post-test instruments measuring civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' civic competence in the experimental group compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$), with a large effect size. The findings indicate that the innovative civic learning model, which emphasizes student-centered, collaborative, and contextual learning, is more effective than conventional teaching methods. The model successfully facilitated active engagement, critical thinking, and the internalization of civic values among students. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of instructional innovation in civic education at the primary level. It also offers practical implications for educators and policymakers to design more effective and relevant civic learning practices.

Keywords: civic competence, civic education, innovative learning model, primary education, student-centered learning

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas model pembelajaran kewarganegaraan inovatif dalam meningkatkan kompetensi kewarganegaraan siswa sekolah dasar. Kompetensi kewarganegaraan yang mencakup pengetahuan, keterampilan, dan sikap merupakan aspek penting dalam mempersiapkan siswa menjadi warga negara yang aktif dan bertanggung jawab di abad ke-21. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi eksperimen dengan kelompok kontrol non-ekivalen yang melibatkan 40 siswa, terdiri dari kelompok eksperimen (n = 20) dan kelompok kontrol (n = 20). Data dikumpulkan melalui instrumen pre-test dan post-test yang mengukur aspek pengetahuan, keterampilan, dan disposisi kewarganegaraan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada kompetensi kewarganegaraan siswa di kelompok eksperimen dibandingkan kelompok kontrol ($p < 0,05$), dengan ukuran efek yang besar. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa model pembelajaran inovatif yang menekankan pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa, kolaboratif, dan kontekstual lebih efektif dibandingkan metode konvensional. Model ini mampu mendorong keterlibatan aktif, kemampuan berpikir kritis, serta internalisasi nilai-nilai kewarganegaraan pada siswa. Penelitian ini memberikan

kontribusi teoretis dan praktis dalam pengembangan pembelajaran PKn di sekolah dasar.

Kata kunci: kompetensi kewarganegaraan, pendidikan kewarganegaraan, model pembelajaran inovatif, sekolah dasar, pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa

A. INTRODUCTION

Civic education has become a crucial pillar in preparing young generations to navigate complex social, political, and digital landscapes in the 21st century. In primary education, it plays a foundational role in developing civic competence, which encompasses knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions necessary for responsible and active citizenship. Recent global trends highlight that civic competence is no longer limited to understanding national identity or constitutional principles but extends to critical thinking, digital participation, and social responsibility in increasingly interconnected societies (Hensmans, 2021; Lo et al., 2022). The transformation of civic life driven by digitalization and globalization requires educational systems to rethink how civic learning is designed and implemented, particularly at the elementary level where foundational attitudes and behaviors are formed.

State-of-the-art research emphasizes that effective civic

education must move beyond traditional, teacher-centered approaches toward more participatory, student-centered, and context-based learning models. Innovative pedagogies such as game-based learning, project-based learning, and collaborative learning have been shown to enhance civic literacy and engagement among primary school students (Pranata & Syamsijulianto, 2025). Similarly, the integration of digital and socio-civic skills has been identified as essential for preparing students to actively participate in digital civic spaces, where information dissemination, social movements, and public discourse increasingly occur (Rodríguez-García et al., 2023). These developments indicate a paradigm shift in civic education—from knowledge transmission to competence development—requiring instructional innovation that aligns with contemporary societal needs.

Despite this growing recognition, the implementation of civic education

in primary schools still faces significant challenges. Empirical evidence suggests that civic learning practices often remain dominated by conventional methods that emphasize memorization rather than active engagement and critical reflection (Utami & Sanjaya, 2025). Furthermore, inconsistencies in curriculum implementation, limited teacher capacity, and insufficient integration of contextual and experiential learning approaches hinder the development of comprehensive civic competence among students (Ruskialan et al., 2025). As a result, students may possess basic civic knowledge but lack the ability to apply it in real-life situations, particularly in terms of critical thinking, participation, and social responsibility.

The urgency of addressing these challenges is further reinforced by the increasing complexity of societal issues, including digital misinformation, social polarization, and declining civic participation among younger generations. Primary education is a strategic stage to cultivate civic competence early, ensuring that students develop not only cognitive understanding but also

affective and behavioral dimensions of citizenship. Without meaningful transformation in instructional practices, civic education risks becoming irrelevant to students' lived experiences and failing to achieve its broader educational goals (Sianipar et al., 2024). Therefore, there is a pressing need to design and empirically test innovative civic learning models that can effectively enhance students' civic competence in contemporary contexts.

Based on these considerations, this study addresses the following research problem: how can an innovative civic learning model enhance civic competence among primary school students? More specifically, the study seeks to examine the extent to which a structured and interactive learning model can improve students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions within elementary education settings.

Several previous studies have explored the role of civic education in primary education, providing important insights but also revealing limitations. First, Utami and Sanjaya (2025) demonstrated that integrating contextual activities such as discussions and social projects can

improve students' understanding of civic concepts and promote prosocial behavior. However, their study primarily employed a qualitative approach, limiting the ability to measure the effectiveness of specific instructional models quantitatively. Second, Pranata and Syamsijulianto (2025) conducted a bibliometric review highlighting the potential of game-based learning in enhancing civic literacy. While their findings emphasize innovative strategies, the study lacks empirical validation in real classroom settings, particularly in measuring learning outcomes. Third, Ruskialan et al. (2025) found that civic competence implementation in schools tends to be uneven, with stronger emphasis on knowledge and attitudes but weaker development of civic skills such as critical thinking and participation. Nevertheless, their study focused on curriculum analysis rather than intervention-based instructional design.

A critical analysis of these studies indicates that although there is a growing emphasis on innovative civic learning approaches, empirical research that systematically tests the effectiveness of structured learning models in improving civic competence

at the primary level remains limited. Most studies either focus on theoretical exploration, descriptive analysis, or single-dimensional outcomes, without integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of civic competence into a comprehensive instructional framework.

This gap highlights the need for research that not only proposes an innovative civic learning model but also empirically examines its effectiveness in enhancing students' civic competence holistically. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of an innovative, student-centered civic learning model with a comprehensive assessment of civic competence, encompassing knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on how instructional innovation can address current challenges in civic education, particularly in the context of primary education.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of an innovative civic learning model in enhancing civic competence among primary school

students. By examining the impact of this model on multiple dimensions of civic competence, this research aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of more effective civic education practices in primary education.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design using a non-equivalent control group structure to examine the effectiveness of an innovative civic learning model in enhancing students' civic competence in primary education. The use of a quasi-experimental approach was considered appropriate due to the natural classroom setting, where random assignment of participants was not feasible. The study involved two intact classes: one experimental group that received the innovative civic learning model and one control group that was taught using conventional instructional methods. Both groups were administered a pre-test prior to the intervention and a post-test after the intervention to measure changes in students' civic competence.

The participants consisted of 40 primary school students drawn from a public elementary school, with each class comprising 20 students. One class ($n = 20$) was designated as the experimental group, while the other class ($n = 20$) served as the control group. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, ensuring that both groups had relatively similar academic abilities, grade levels, and prior exposure to civic education content. All participants were in the same grade level, representing upper primary students with comparable cognitive and developmental characteristics. Initial equivalence between the groups was assessed using pre-test scores to ensure that there were no significant differences in baseline civic competence.

The study was conducted during the regular academic semester, with the intervention implemented over a period of approximately four to six weeks. Civic education lessons were integrated into the existing curriculum, with two instructional sessions per week, each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The experimental group was exposed to an innovative civic learning model designed to promote active,

student-centered learning. This model emphasized engagement with real-life civic issues, collaborative learning activities, and reflective thinking processes. The instructional procedure included several stages, namely orientation, exploration, collaboration, reflection, and evaluation. During the orientation phase, students were introduced to contextual civic issues relevant to their daily lives. In the exploration and collaboration phases, students participated in group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and case-based activities. The reflection phase encouraged students to critically examine civic values and their roles as citizens, while the evaluation phase assessed their understanding and engagement. In contrast, the control group received conventional instruction characterized by teacher-centered explanations, textbook-based learning, and individual assignments.

Data were collected using a civic competence instrument developed based on three key dimensions: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. Civic knowledge was assessed using multiple-choice questions that measured students'

understanding of fundamental civic concepts and principles. Civic skills were evaluated through short-answer and scenario-based questions that required students to demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving, and participatory abilities. Civic dispositions were measured using a Likert-scale questionnaire that captured students' attitudes, values, and sense of responsibility toward civic life. Prior to its implementation, the instrument underwent a validation process involving expert judgment to ensure content validity. Construct validity was further examined through item analysis, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to ensure internal consistency.

The data collection procedure was conducted in three main stages. First, a pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to determine baseline levels of civic competence. Second, the intervention was implemented, with the experimental group receiving the innovative civic learning model and the control group continuing with conventional instruction. Third, a post-test was administered to both groups to evaluate the impact of the

intervention on students' civic competence. All assessments were conducted under similar conditions to ensure consistency and minimize potential bias.

Data analysis was performed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were used to summarize students' performance in both groups. Inferential analysis was conducted to determine the significance of differences between groups and within groups. An independent samples t-test was used to compare post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, while a paired samples t-test was used to examine differences between pre-test and post-test scores within each group. Prior to conducting inferential tests, assumptions of normality and homogeneity were tested using the Shapiro–Wilk test and Levene's test, respectively. Additionally, effect size was calculated using Cohen's *d* to determine the magnitude of the treatment effect. All statistical analyses were conducted at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study.

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from students and their guardians. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for research purposes. Furthermore, participation in the study was voluntary, and students were given the option to withdraw at any stage without any consequences.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented to examine the effectiveness of the innovative civic learning model in enhancing students' civic competence. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, assumption testing, and inferential statistics. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test scores for both experimental and control groups.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Civic Competence Scores

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD
Experimental Group	Pre-test	20	62.45	6.12
Experimental Group	Post-test	20	82.30	5.48
Control Group	Pre-test	20	61.80	5.95
Control Group	Post-test	20	70.25	6.20

The descriptive results indicate that both groups had relatively similar pre-test scores, suggesting comparable initial civic competence. However, after the intervention, the experimental group showed a substantial increase in mean scores compared to the control group.

Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests were conducted.

The Shapiro–Wilk test showed that all data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), and Levene’s test confirmed homogeneity of variance ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, parametric tests were appropriate. Table 2 presents the results of the paired samples t-test for within-group comparisons.

Table 2. Paired Samples t-Test Results

Group	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Experimental Group	19.85	12.34	0.000
Control Group	8.45	5.21	0.000

The results indicate a statistically significant improvement in both groups. However, the magnitude of improvement in the experimental group was considerably higher. To

further examine the differences between groups, an independent samples t-test was conducted on post-test scores.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-Test (Post-test)

Variable	t-value	p-value
Civic Competence	6.27	0.000

The results show a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the innovative civic learning model had a significant effect on students' civic competence. Additionally, the effect size was calculated using Cohen's d , yielding a value of 1.98, which is considered a large effect size. This suggests that the intervention had a strong practical impact on students' civic competence.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of an innovative civic learning model significantly enhances students' civic competence in primary education. The substantial improvement observed in the experimental group confirms that student-centered, interactive, and context-based instructional approaches are more effective than conventional methods in fostering meaningful civic learning outcomes. This aligns with recent research emphasizing that active learning environments contribute to deeper understanding and long-term retention of civic knowledge and skills (Schuitema et al., 2020).

One of the key findings is the significant increase in students' civic

competence across cognitive, skill-based, and dispositional dimensions. This result supports the argument that civic education should not be limited to knowledge acquisition but must integrate participatory and reflective learning processes (Knowles et al., 2022). The innovative model applied in this study facilitated students' engagement with real-life civic issues, enabling them to connect theoretical concepts with practical applications. Such contextual learning has been widely recognized as essential in developing critical civic awareness and responsible citizenship (Geboers et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the large effect size observed in this study indicates that the intervention had a strong impact not only statistically but also practically. This finding reinforces previous studies suggesting that collaborative and inquiry-based learning approaches can significantly enhance students' critical thinking and civic participation (Garcia-Carmona, 2020). By engaging students in discussions, problem-solving activities, and reflection, the model encouraged active participation, which is a key component of effective civic education.

Another important finding is that while the control group also showed improvement, the increase was relatively modest compared to the experimental group. This suggests that traditional teaching methods, although still contributing to learning, may not be sufficient to develop higher-order civic competencies such as critical thinking, decision-making, and social responsibility. This is consistent with findings by Torney-Purta et al. (2021), who argued that passive learning environments limit students' opportunities to develop participatory skills and civic engagement.

The results also highlight the importance of integrating affective and behavioral dimensions into civic education. The improvement in civic dispositions observed in this study indicates that the innovative learning model successfully fostered positive attitudes, values, and a sense of responsibility among students. This aligns with recent studies emphasizing that character and value formation are essential components of civic competence (Reichert & Print, 2020). Without addressing these dimensions, civic education may fail to produce responsible and engaged citizens.

Moreover, the findings support the growing emphasis on 21st-century civic skills, particularly in the context of digital and global citizenship. Although this study did not explicitly focus on digital tools, the interactive and collaborative nature of the learning model reflects principles associated with digital-age learning environments (Choi et al., 2021). This suggests that innovative civic learning models can serve as a foundation for integrating more advanced digital civic competencies in future research. From a pedagogical perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of how instructional design influences civic learning outcomes. The structured phases of the innovative model—orientation, exploration, collaboration, reflection, and evaluation—provided a comprehensive framework that supports active learning and meaningful engagement. This finding is consistent with research highlighting the effectiveness of structured inquiry-based models in enhancing student learning outcomes (Saye & Brush, 2020).

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small and

limited to a single school context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, which may not fully capture long-term impacts on civic competence. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, as well as longitudinal designs to examine sustained effects.

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that innovative civic learning models significantly enhance civic competence among primary school students. By integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, the model offers a comprehensive approach to civic education that aligns with contemporary educational demands. These findings underscore the importance of instructional innovation in addressing current challenges in civic education and preparing students to become active, responsible citizens in a rapidly changing world.

D. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of an innovative civic learning model in enhancing civic competence among primary school

students. The findings reveal that the implementation of the model significantly improves students' civic competence across cognitive, skill-based, and dispositional dimensions. Compared to conventional instructional approaches, the innovative model demonstrated a stronger impact, as evidenced by higher post-test scores and a large effect size. These results confirm that student-centered, interactive, and context-based learning approaches are more effective in fostering meaningful civic learning outcomes.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on civic education by providing empirical evidence that instructional innovation plays a critical role in developing comprehensive civic competence at the primary education level. By integrating active participation, collaboration, and reflective learning processes, the model successfully bridges the gap between theoretical civic knowledge and real-life application. Overall, this research underscores the importance of rethinking traditional civic education practices to better align with the demands of 21st-century citizenship.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to a single school context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the quasi-experimental design, while appropriate for educational settings, does not fully eliminate potential confounding variables that may influence the results. Third, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, which may not capture the long-term effects of the innovative civic learning model on students' civic competence. Additionally, the study relied primarily on test-based and self-reported measures, which may not fully reflect students' actual civic behavior in real-world contexts.

Future research is recommended to address the limitations of this study and further advance the field of civic education. First, studies involving larger and more diverse samples across different schools and regions are needed to enhance the generalizability of findings. Second, longitudinal research designs should be conducted to examine the long-term

impact of innovative civic learning models on students' civic competence and behavior. Third, future studies may explore the integration of digital technologies into civic learning models to better reflect the demands of digital citizenship in the 21st century. Additionally, qualitative approaches such as classroom observations and interviews could be incorporated to provide deeper insights into students' learning experiences and behavioral changes. Finally, comparative studies examining different types of innovative learning models would be valuable in identifying the most effective strategies for enhancing civic competence in primary education.

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