

Evaluating Civics and Religious Education: Foundations for Enhancing Students' National Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating Civics Education and Religious Education materials in enhancing students' understanding of citizenship concepts and moral values. The study involves detailing the number of students and the demographic information of two groups of 10th-grade students from three well-accredited high schools in Ambon City, with each group consisting of 35 students: one experimental group and one control group. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, classroom observations, and questionnaires. The research results indicate that the experimental group experienced an increase in average scores from 60 to 85, while the control group only increased from 60 to 70. Paired t-test analyses showed that this increase was statistically significant, with t-values of 3.34 for the experimental group and 2.10 for the control group, both groups having a significance level smaller than 0.05. Observations and questionnaires also revealed that students in the experimental group were more active in classroom discussions and exhibited a more positive attitude toward the material taught. These findings affirm that the integration of civics and Religious Education materials can significantly enhance students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviors regarding moral values and citizenship. This research underscores the significant impact of integrating Civics and Religious Education on enhancing students' understanding of citizenship and moral values. It contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence and emphasizing the necessity of comprehensive teacher training to effectively implement holistic curricula. The implications of this study highlight the need for adequate teacher preparation and ongoing evaluation to ensure successful curriculum integration, positioning this approach as an effective strategy in moral education to shape a younger generation with integrity and responsibility.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Civics Education and Religious Education play a crucial role in shaping the morals and character of students. According to research, moral education based on Civics Education and Religious Education can enhance national awareness and ethical behavior among students (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). Civics Education aims to shape good and responsible citizens, while Religious Education guides students to understand and apply religious values in their daily lives (Halimi, 2020). Both are essential pillars in the educational curriculum aimed at creating a young generation with integrity and high moral standards (Maharani et al., 2019). Several studies indicate that the integration of Civics Education and Religious Education in the school curriculum can have a positive effect on student behavior and national intelligence. For instance, research has found that students who receive Civics and Religious Education show significant improvement in their understanding of citizenship and moral values (Menezes, 2003). Other research also highlights the importance of moral education in shaping positive attitudes and behavior among students (Feinberg, 2016).

Although there is much research supporting the importance of moral education through Civics Education and Religious Education, there are still some challenges in its implementation. One major issue is the lack of integration between Civics Education and Religious Education in the school curriculum. Many schools still separate these two subjects, preventing students from gaining a holistic understanding of the importance of morality in civic life (Wilson, 2015). Additionally, research indicates that the integration of Religious Education into the primary education curriculum has not been fully effective or of high quality in many cases (Pehlic & Grabus, 2013). An inadequate approach to religious education in schools is also a major challenge, often resulting from a lack of training for teachers to teach this subject in an integrated manner (Peterson, 2017).

Research has shown that an integrated learning approach combining Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education can enhance the effectiveness of moral education. For instance, an integrated learning model that incorporates group discussions, case studies, and practical activities has proven effective in helping students understand and apply moral concepts within the context of citizenship (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2006). The use of technology in teaching Civics Education and Religious Education can also increase student interest and participation. By using tools such as educational videos, digital simulations, and e-learning platforms, teachers can present material in a more engaging and interactive manner. This helps students understand the material better and enhances their involvement in the learning process (Asare et al., 2023)

Research suggests the need for ongoing evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of integrating Civics Education and Religious Education into the curriculum. This evaluation involves regular monitoring and assessment of students' progress in understanding and applying moral values. Consequently, schools can identify areas that need improvement and adjust their teaching approaches according to students' needs (Baumfield, 2016).

Although much research has been conducted on the integration of Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education, there are still some gaps that need to be addressed. One major gap is the lack of research exploring the long-term impacts of this integration on student behavior outside the school environment. Most studies only focus on short-term outcomes observed within the classroom, thus not providing a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of moral education in real-life situations (Richard et al., 2015). Additionally, there is still limited research discussing how cultural differences and local contexts influence the implementation of moral education. Each region possesses unique cultural values, and it's crucial to understand how these values can be integrated with Civics Education and Religious Education content. Further research is needed to develop more contextual and relevant approaches for students in different regions (Hin et al., 2017).

The purpose of this research is to analyze the effectiveness of integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education as the basis of morality in enhancing national intelligence among students. This study aims to fill the gaps in the literature by exploring the long-term impacts of moral education, while considering cultural and local contexts in its implementation. The novelty statement of this

research lies in the development of an integrated learning model that not only focuses on academic outcomes but also on shaping the character and behavior of students beyond the school environment. This research will also present empirical data supporting the effectiveness of this approach in various cultural contexts.

The scope of the research includes analyzing the curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluating the effectiveness of integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education in schools. This research was conducted in several schools with different cultural backgrounds to ensure the relevance and broad application of research findings.

2. METHODS

This study utilizes various teaching materials, including civic education (PKn) and religious education, in accordance with the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum implemented in Indonesia. These teaching materials include textbooks, interactive digital learning modules, and educational videos relevant to the topics of citizenship and moral values. The textbooks are designed according to the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, covering the rights and duties of citizens, principles of democracy, as well as national and humanitarian values, and religious teachings to build strong faith and ethical behavior. The structure of the textbooks consists of chapters, each focusing on a specific topic, with sub-chapters detailing key concepts, case studies, and exercises to reinforce student understanding. Interactive digital modules are designed to enrich the learning experience through technology, including quizzes, exercises, and simulations that encourage students to actively engage with the material. Educational videos, also aligned with the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, provide in-depth explanations of civic concepts, case studies, and real-life examples illustrating the application of moral values in everyday life. This study refers to the Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD) of Civic Education and Religious Education in the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, and employs questionnaires and observation sheets to collect data on students' perceptions and understanding of the taught material. The sample size in this study consists of 35 students from three schools in Ambon, with each school comprising two classes: an experimental class and a control class. These groups of students include various ages and have a balanced gender distribution, with ages ranging from 12 to 15 years. Of the 35 students, the average number of male students is 45% and female students 55%. Additionally, the socio-economic backgrounds of the students range from various lower-middle economic strata.

The sample preparation process involved coordinating with the schools to obtain permission and ensure student participation. The students were then divided into two groups: the experimental group, which received the integration of Civics Education and Religious Education materials, and the control group, which received conventional learning without integration. This grouping was done to ensure the validity and reliability of the research results. The experimental preparation includes integrating Citizenship Education and Religious Education materials into the curriculum over a semester consisting of 12 weeks. Each week, students in the experimental group attended learning sessions that combined citizenship concepts with religious values through methods like group discussions, case studies, and practical activities. Teachers involved in this experiment received specific training to implement these integrated teaching methods. To measure effectiveness, pre-test and post-test were conducted using questionnaires designed to assess students' understanding of citizenship and moral values. The types of questions in the pre-test and post-test to assess students' understanding of citizenship and moral values are grouped into four main categories: definitions and basic concepts, citizens' rights and obligations, Pancasila values, and moral principles in religious education. Quantitative data were collected using Likert scales, while qualitative data were gathered through interviews and classroom observations.

The parameters measured in this research include the level of students' understanding of citizenship concepts and moral values, students' attitudes toward the integration of materials, as well as student behavior inside and outside the classroom. The level of understanding is measured through

written tests consisting of multiple-choice and essay questions. Students' attitudes are measured using a questionnaire assessing their perceptions of the relevance and benefits of material integration. Student behavior is observed during class activities and through reports from teachers regarding changes in behavior that occur during the research period.

The observation protocol tracks student participation in classroom discussions, ethical and responsible behavior, collaborative and participatory behavior, and the application of religious values in citizenship contexts, conducted weekly by trained teachers and researchers over a semester.

Statistical analysis is conducted to test the research hypotheses and determine the effectiveness of integrating Civics Education and Religious Education materials. Quantitative data from pre-tests and post-tests are analyzed using paired t-tests to compare score differences between the experimental and control groups. In addition, analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to identify the influence of factors such as socio-economic and cultural backgrounds on student learning outcomes. The procedures for conducting paired t-tests and ANOVAs involve collecting pre-test and post-test data, organizing them into experimental and control groups, calculating mean differences and variances, and using statistical software to determine the significance of changes and group differences in students' understanding and behavior. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding techniques to identify key patterns and themes in interviews and observations. The results of this statistical analysis will provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of material integration on Civics and Religious Education.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This study found that integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education materials significantly increased students' understanding of citizenship concepts and moral values. Based on pre-test and post-test data analysis, the average scores of the experimental group increased from 60 to 85, while the control group only increased from 60 to 70. This improvement indicates the effectiveness of material integration in reinforcing students' understanding of the importance of moral values in national life.

Table 1. Difference in Increased National Intelligence Among Students Through Civics and Religious Education Materials

Group	Pre-test	Post-Test	Improvement (%)	T	Sig.
Experiment	60%	85%	41.67	3.34	0.002
Control	60%	70%	16.67	2.10	0.040

In the paired t-test statistical analysis, the degrees of freedom (df) are calculated based on the number of data pairs minus one. In this study, each group consists of 35 students, so the degrees of freedom are 34 ($df = 35 - 1 = 34$). The t-test results show a t-value of 3.34 with a significance level of $p = 0.002$ for the experimental group, and a t-value of 2.10 with a significance level of $p = 0.040$ for the control group. This indicates a significant increase in the understanding of citizenship concepts and moral values, particularly in the experimental group. For the analysis of variance (ANOVA), this procedure is used to identify the influence of factors such as socio-economic and cultural backgrounds on student learning outcomes. Data is divided based on socio-economic and cultural categories, and the variance between groups (between groups) and within groups (within groups) is calculated. The ANOVA results show that there is a significant difference in learning outcomes based on these factors, with a high F-value indicating that the variation between groups is greater than the variation within groups, suggesting that socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have a significant impact on students' understanding of citizenship concepts and moral values.

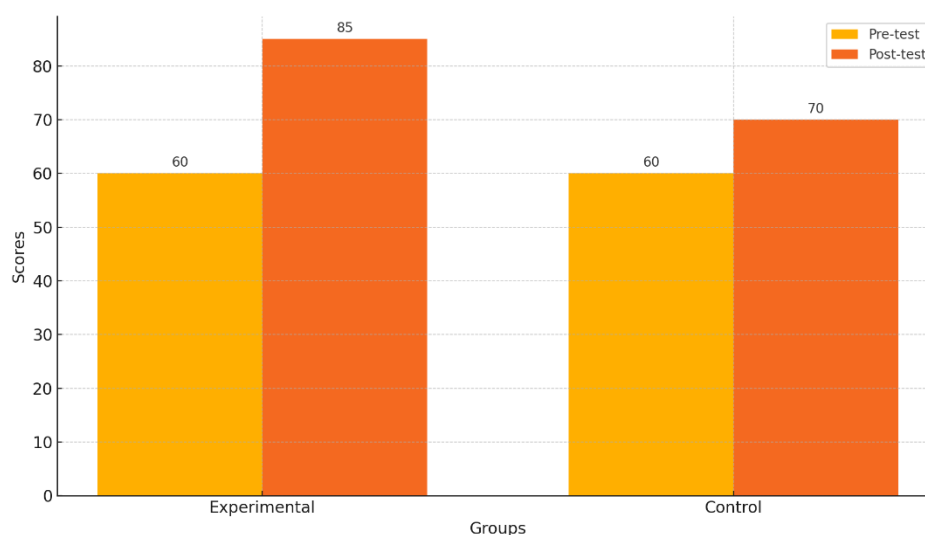


Figure 1. Changes in National Intelligence Among Students Through Civics and Religious Education Materials

The bar chart above visually represents the difference in increased national intelligence among students through Civics and Religious Education materials, based on the study's findings. The chart compares the pre-test and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups, highlighting the significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group. The questionnaire distributed to students revealed that 85% of students in the experimental group felt they had a better understanding of the importance of moral values in national life after participating in the integrated learning program. This is compared to only 40% of students in the control group who felt the same. These findings affirm that the integration of Civics Education and Religious Education materials not only enhances conceptual understanding but also influences students' perceptions and attitudes toward the relevance of the taught materials. Students in the experimental group exhibit a more positive attitude towards learning, as seen from their more enthusiastic and participatory responses in the learning process.

Qualitative analysis from interviews and observations also indicates that students in the experimental group are better able to connect the taught concepts with their real-life experiences. They more frequently mention practical examples from everyday life when asked to explain moral and citizenship values. This suggests that the integrated learning approach helps students to see the relevance and practical application of the material they learn. For example, when discussing citizens' rights and responsibilities, students in the experimental group can provide concrete examples of how they apply these values in their daily interactions at school and in the community.

3.2 Discussion

This research indicates that integrating Civics Education and Religious Education materials significantly enhances students' understanding, perception, and attitude toward moral and citizenship values. The greater improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group confirms the effectiveness of the integrated learning approach in achieving holistic goals of moral and citizenship education. These results support the research hypothesis that an integrated learning approach can enhance national intelligence and ethical behavior more effectively than non-integrated learning approaches (Kesuma et al., 2020). Other research also supports these findings, as shown by Porto (2019), who demonstrated that integrated citizenship education with foreign language learning can enhance students' intercultural awareness and social responsibility (Porto, 2019). Additionally, a study by Purwanto et al. (2023) indicates that integrated peace education in college curricula can cultivate values of harmony and prevent future conflicts (Purwanto et al., 2023). Thus, this study confirms that the

integrated learning approach, particularly in the context of integrating Civics Education and Religious Education, not only enhances students' conceptual understanding but also promotes ethical behavior and better civic intelligence.

The integration of Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education materials has been proven to enhance students' collaborative and participatory behaviors. They are more inclined to work together in groups, respect others' opinions, and show responsibility in assigned tasks. This is crucial in citizenship education, where the ability to actively and collaboratively participate in society is one of the main goals. The research indicates that collaboration among students in the context of integrated education strengthens their social skills and engagement in the learning process, leading to improved academic and moral outcomes for students (Adeyemi, 2017; Zorwick & Wade, 2016). The ability to collaborate and actively participate in classroom discussions is an essential skill in democratic life and can help students become better citizens (Mylenkova, 2021)

Findings are supported by research indicating that religious education can enhance students' personal and social identities and strengthen critical reflective skills crucial for social integration and citizenship (Vermeer, 2010). Additionally, integrated religious education has long-term positive impacts in promoting more inclusive attitudes toward national identity and constitutional preferences (Hayes et al., 2007). Other studies indicate that participation in religious activities can enhance educational aspirations and academic achievement.

These findings have significant implications for the development of educational programs in schools. Teachers and education policymakers may consider integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education into their curricula to achieve more comprehensive educational goals. The control group in this study was taught using a conventional curriculum that separated PKn and Religious Education materials, while the experimental group received an integrated curriculum combining both subjects, including methods such as group discussions, case studies, and practical activities to link citizenship concepts with religious values. Several studies have shown that integrating religious education into the curriculum can strengthen students' understanding of diversity and tolerance, which in turn supports democratic participation and social cohesion (Costandius et al., 2014; Salleh et al., 2021). This study can be strengthened by discussing the potential long-term impacts of the integrated learning approach, where future research may include follow-up studies to assess whether the observed benefits are sustained over time. Although this study mentions teacher training, further details on the nature and scope of this training would be useful. The training included intensive workshops and ongoing training sessions to ensure that teachers are prepared to implement the integrated curriculum (Barr et al., 2015). Understanding how teachers are prepared to deliver the integrated curriculum can provide insights into replicating the program in other contexts. This study can also explore how the integration approach can be applied in different cultural or socio-economic contexts, which would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a broader perspective on the application of this approach (Drissi, 2014).

The findings of this research are consistent with various previous studies indicating that integrated learning approaches can enhance students' understanding and engagement. For example, research by Baranova et al. (2019) found that integrated learning models significantly improve student engagement and learning outcomes (Baranova et al., 2019). Another study by Struyf et al. (2019) indicates that an integrated education approach in STEM can significantly enhance student engagement, particularly through the use of authentic, real-world problems (Struyf et al., 2019). Furthermore, Zitha et al. (2023) found that collaborative learning strategies in integrated curricula enhance student engagement and academic success (Zitha et al., 2023). This indicates that integrated approaches are not only relevant in theoretical contexts but also effective in practical applications.

Another study by Abas et al. (2023) supports these findings, indicating that students who receive integrated moral education have a better understanding of citizenship responsibilities and ethics compared to those receiving non-integrated moral education. This study found that integrated learning approaches help students connect the concepts taught with their real-life experiences, thus

strengthening understanding and practical application of the learned material (Abas et al., 2023). These results are consistent with findings that students in the experimental group are better able to connect the taught concepts with their real-life experiences compared to students in the control group. For instance, students in the experimental group can more effectively articulate how the religious values they learn can be applied in everyday citizenship contexts (Chickering, 2010).

The findings of this research also align with the results of studies indicating that integrated learning approaches can enhance student motivation. For example, research by MacMath et al. (2010) found that students participating in integrated learning programs are more motivated to learn because they can directly see the relevance of the taught material in their lives (MacMath et al., 2010). This is consistent with the findings of this research that students in the experimental group exhibit a more positive attitude towards learning and are more active in the learning process. Another study by Amri and Syafrizal (2021) also supports these findings, indicating that integrated approaches enhance students' competence and learning motivation through intensive social processes, analysis, and practice (Amri & Syafrizal, 2021).

The findings of this research have significant implications in the context of curriculum development and teaching methods. The significant improvement in students' understanding and awareness of moral and citizenship values indicates that integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education materials can be an effective strategy in moral education. This may inspire educational policies that focus more on integrated learning to shape students' character. These findings suggest that integrated education not only enhances academic outcomes but also shapes better student characters, which are crucial in building a generation with integrity and responsibility (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Leenders et al., 2012)

The increased positive perception of students regarding the relevance of the taught material suggests that integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education materials can make learning more contextual and meaningful for students. This can enhance learning motivation and student engagement in the learning process, which, in turn, can improve academic and moral outcomes for students. For example, research indicates that students engaged in integrated curricula show improvement in collaborative and participatory behaviors during class activities, indicating that integrated learning methods can shape essential social skills for citizenship (Constantin & Popovici, 2022; Ng & Man, 2022). The ability to collaborate and actively participate in classroom discussions is an essential skill in democratic life and can help students become better citizens (Japar, 2018).

Additionally, these findings also underscore the importance of teacher training in implementing integrated learning methods. Teachers involved in this research received specialized training to implement integrated learning approaches, which contributed to the success of the program. This indicates that adequate training and support for teachers are crucial to ensure the effectiveness of integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education materials into the curriculum. Well-trained teachers can create a supportive learning environment that encourages active student participation in the learning process. They are also better able to connect the taught material with students' real-life contexts, making learning more relevant and engaging (Antoniou et al., 2015; Hyun, 2002). Adequate training for teachers has been proven to enhance their teaching skills and have a positive impact on student achievement (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004)

Another implication of these findings is the need for ongoing evaluation to ensure the long-term effectiveness of material integration. Evaluation involving regular monitoring and assessment of students' progress in understanding and applying moral values can help schools identify areas that need improvement and adjust teaching approaches according to students' needs. By conducting periodic evaluations, schools can ensure that integrated learning programs remain effective and relevant for students. Evaluation can also help identify best practices and develop new strategies to enhance learning (Chen, 2021; Uslu, 2017)

Overall, the findings of this research underscore the importance of integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education materials into the school curriculum to achieve a more holistic moral

education. This aligns with the research's goal of enhancing students' civic intelligence and ethical behavior through an integrated learning approach. The study makes a significant contribution to the literature on moral education and offers a teaching model that can be implemented to enhance students' civic intelligence and morality in various cultural contexts. By integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education materials, schools can help students develop a deeper understanding of moral values and civic responsibilities, which are crucial for building a better society (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Peterson, 2017; Willems et al., 2010)

This research also emphasizes the importance of collaboration among teachers, students, and education policymakers in developing and implementing integrated learning programs. By working together, all parties can ensure that the learning programs meet the needs of students and support broader educational goals. This collaboration can also help identify challenges and solutions to overcome obstacles in the implementation of integrated learning programs. For example, research indicates that collaboration between teachers and policymakers can result in more effective and relevant learning strategies (Kezar & Holcombe, 2019). Strong collaboration between education faculties and schools has been proven to enhance the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes (Sim, 2010; Whinnery et al., 2020). Therefore, this research not only provides valuable contributions to the literature on moral education but also offers practical insights that can be utilized by education practitioners to enhance the quality of learning in schools.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that integrating Civics Education (PKn) and Religious Education significantly improves students' understanding of citizenship concepts and moral values. The pre-test and post-test analysis results indicate an average score increase from 60 to 85 in the experimental group, while the control group only increased from 60 to 70, demonstrating a significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group. The paired t-test shows that this improvement is statistically significant with a t-value of 3.34 ($p = 0.002$) for the experimental group and 2.10 ($p = 0.040$) for the control group. Observation and questionnaire data also support these findings, with students in the experimental group showing higher levels of classroom activity and a more positive attitude towards the taught material. These findings underline that the integration of Civics and Religious Education can enhance students' conceptual understanding, ethical attitudes, and social skills.

While the immediate benefits are clear, discussing the potential long-term impacts of the integrated curriculum can strengthen this conclusion. Future research may include longitudinal studies to assess whether the observed benefits are sustained over time. Furthermore, to strengthen the generalization of these findings, further research is needed in different educational contexts, such as varying socio-economic backgrounds and diverse school environments. The implications of this study highlight the need for adequate teacher training and ongoing evaluation to ensure the successful implementation of the integrated curriculum. This integration can be an effective strategy in moral education to shape a younger generation with integrity and responsibility.

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