



## Strengthening Student Nationalism Through Civic Education at Timor University

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to (1) Describe the strengthening of student nationalism through civic education at Timor University, (2) Analyze the obstacles and challenges in strengthening student nationalism through civic education at Timor University, (3) Analyze the efforts made in facing challenges and obstacles in strengthening student nationalism through civic education at Timor University. This research uses a case study method with a qualitative approach. Determination of research data sources using purposive techniques, namely: Civics lecturers, and Civics class students. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews and documentation techniques. Data analysis uses the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model with three stages, namely: data condensation, data presentation and conclusion drawing. The results of this study indicate that (1) strengthening student nationalism through civic education is carried out by applying innovative and interactive learning methods, namely, lectures, discussions, and hands-on learning. (2) challenges and obstacles in strengthening student nationalism in the border region of Indonesia and Timor Leste are the complexity of cultural identity, limited facilities in learning, and technological developments. (3) efforts made in overcoming challenges and obstacles in strengthening student nationalism through civic education in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste are carried out with several activities, namely the development of more interactive learning methods such as project-based learning, empowerment programs for nationalism values.

**Keywords:** *Nationalism; Civic Education; Border Region*

### **Introduction**

The boundaries of a country occupy an important position when viewed from geographical, legal, and political aspects. Geographically, the boundaries mark the area of a country that includes land, sea, and air above it. Legally, the boundaries of a country determine the scope of the applicability of national law, while politically, the boundaries represent the end of the reach of a country's supreme power over its territory and everything within that territory. The border areas of Indonesia have their own characteristics and traits influenced by culture, ethnicity, local wisdom, and natural potential in the region. A group of people or individuals living within a border area who share common interests and possess culture, local wisdom, customary law, norms, and various regulations that are ready to be obeyed is known as a border community. Border areas, in the lives of their citizens who are Indonesian nationals, tend to fall into the category of communities that are lagging in various aspects of life. The most visible problem in

communities in border areas is related to welfare and infrastructure improvement. This will certainly impact the desire to become citizens of other countries to obtain a better quality of life. In addition, communities in border areas reflect a nation that is very vulnerable to contemporary issues.

The discourse of nationalism often becomes an issue that is vulnerable to being played, negotiated, and discussed in border areas. This is because communities in border areas have different and unique characteristics compared to communities that do not originate from and reside in border areas (Bria, 2018). Border communities tend to have a higher level of mobility to interact and engage directly with other communities of different backgrounds and nationalities. They interact socio-culturally, economically, and even politically. This intense interaction gives rise to tendencies that differ from non-border communities. Setyanto, Satyawan, Wijaya, et al. (2018) state that nationalism has a dual role in the life of a nation and state. On one hand, it is an important force to maintain the integrity and continuity of a country. However, if not managed well, nationalism can also become a threat that triggers division, especially if the government does not pay sufficient attention to all regions of its country, particularly border areas. What is very concerning is the influence of increasingly sophisticated technology, allowing everyone to exchange information easily, which may diminish the spirit of maintaining the nationalism of the Indonesian nation itself. Another factor causing the fading sense of nationalism among citizens is the low human resources and the low welfare of the community caused by inadequate social services reaching communities in border areas.

Globalization is a process of forming a system, rules, and regulations that apply to all nations in the world. Globalization does not recognize territorial boundaries and does not acknowledge local, regional, or national policies. The phenomenon of globalization provides various easier access to life for humans, and its impacts are quite contrasting. The ongoing development of globalization continues to sweep across. The world including the country of Indonesia has succeeded in influencing various realms of life in society. Different from the previous opinion, Mihelj & Jiménez Martínez (2021) argue that the initial perception of digital technology tends to associate it with globalization trends and the spirit of cosmopolitanism. However, over time this view has undergone a significant shift. Academics are now increasingly aware that digital technology actually plays an important role in reviving nationalism. This situation reflects the complexity of the impact of digital technology on the global socio-political landscape. On one hand, this technology facilitates global interconnection, but on the other hand, it also becomes an effective tool in strengthening national identity and encouraging movements that tend to be exclusive. Moving from the previous opinion, Lekakis (2017) explains that neglecting nationalism can lead to a misunderstanding of the relationship between globalization and nationalist sentiments. This narrow view has the potential to create inaccurate perceptions regarding how the globalization process will impact the development and manifestation of nationalism. Thus, it is important to consider the character of nationalism in analyzing and predicting political and social developments in the era of globalization. This approach allows for a more accurate understanding of the complex interactions between global forces and national identity.

Based on the research results of Feka & Anin (2023), it can be known that some people in border areas, when talking about nationalism, do not understand it, due to not having undergone education since childhood. Their understanding of the state is assistance from the government. Community participation in governance, such as in national day commemoration ceremonies, always involves community engagement. Their love for their nation answers simply that what they do daily is work, eat, and drink. They want a concept of knowledge about nationalism, so that every problem with neighboring countries can become a basis for thinking to maintain security and guard the land at the border points. Education becomes an important factor in strengthening the character of the Indonesian nation, especially among the younger generation in border areas. Schools have the obligation to nurture and strengthen the values of nationalism among their students for the realization of sustainable development in order to strengthen nationalism in schools. Nationalism in border areas is very important to maintain the unity and integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Border areas are locations that are vulnerable to the

fluctuations of feelings and attitudes of nationalism (Sutiyono & Suharno, 2018). Strengthening the nationalism of students requires an educational medium that builds a sustainable attitude of nationalism. This education is carried out through educational institutions from elementary school age to higher education (Werdiningsih, 2018). Citizenship education plays an important role in developing young citizens into adult citizens who possess citizenship attitudes that include resilience, national commitment, love for the homeland, and a sense of responsibility as Indonesian citizens (Nurgiansah & Rachman, 2022).

One of the provinces in Indonesia that shares a land border with neighboring countries is the Province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). There are four regencies in the NTT Province that share a land border with RDTL, namely the Regency The land border area of Indonesia that exists in these four districts is an area that still experiences backwardness. The quality of human resources in this area is still classified as low. Accessibility, infrastructure, and supporting facilities for the activities of the population are still limited (Julqurniati & Susanty, 2019) is a higher education institution in the border area of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste with a fairly long establishment history. Unimor previously originated from the University of East Timor which, due to the referendum in East Timor, then experienced a relocation to Indonesia. As a university in the border area, it certainly has its own challenges in carrying out its vision and mission in educating young citizens. The students pursuing education at Unimor are mostly from the districts directly bordering Timor Leste, namely Malaka Regency, Belu Regency, and TTU Regency. This becomes one of the important reasons for strengthening nationalism among young citizens at Unimor because most of its students reside in the border area between Indonesia and Timor Leste. Strengthening nationalism among young citizens in formal education is more appropriately carried out through Citizenship Education. Citizenship Education is very much needed to lead to intelligent (smart) and good (good citizenship) citizens in accordance with the aspirations of their country. Citizenship education is very important to instill values of love for the homeland, morality, and a sense of nationalism that becomes the identity and character of the nation in achieving national integrity, thus serving as a strong and solid foundation for developing and nurturing the personalities of the younger generation and even every citizen of Indonesia (Pahlevi, 2017). Citizenship education plays an important role in strengthening the character of students, especially those in border areas. Strengthening the nationalism of students in border areas requires a medium that can provide an understanding of the importance of nationalism. Citizenship education has a crucial role in strengthening the nationalism of students in border areas.

### ***Method***

This research uses a case study method with a qualitative approach. Data collection uses observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. This research was conducted at Universitas Timor with the research subjects being; Pkn lecturers, and students who are currently attending Pkn classes. Data analysis uses the model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, which consists of three steps: (1) Data condensation; (2) Data presentation; and (3) Conclusion drawing and data verification.

### ***Results and Discussion***

Unimor is one of the higher education institutions located in Sasi Village, Kefamenanu City District, North Central Timor Regency. The location of this higher education institution is in the border area between Indonesia and Timor Leste. Unimor was established based on Presidential Regulation Number 119 of 2014 concerning the Establishment of Unimor dated October 6, 2014. Unimor is a transformation from Unimor managed by the Cendana Wangi Education Foundation (Sandinawa) which was established on June 6, 2000, after the announcement of the results of the referendum of the East Timorese people by the UN in 1999 based on the Ministerial Decision. National Education Number

67/D/O/2000 Regarding the Establishment and Granting/Transfer of Registered Status to 11 (eleven) Study Programs in the Unimor Environment in Kefamenanu, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Unimor originates from the East Timor University (Untim) which was established by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia in Dili under the auspices of the Timor Loro Sae Foundation with Notary Deed Number 135 dated April 28, 1986. After conducting feasibility tests and submitting proposals to the Minister of Education and Culture to establish a university in the border area, Unimor officially changed to a state university on October 6, 2014. In 2014, after becoming a State University, Unimor had four faculties and 11 study programs. Currently, in 2024, Timor University has four faculties and 16 study programs. In the context of border areas, citizenship education has a significant dual role. In addition to functioning as an educational medium, this course also plays an important role in instilling and strengthening the sense of nationalism among students. Through citizenship education, students are introduced to the richness of culture, both local and national. The goal is to foster the spirit and pride of students in maintaining the integrity and sovereignty of the country, especially in border areas that have a strategic position. With this approach, it is hoped that students not only understand the concept of citizenship theoretically but also have a strong commitment to actively participate in maintaining the unity of the nation and state. The implementation of the PKn learning process in the classroom is based on the RPS, which includes introductory activities, core activities, and closing activities. In the RPS, PKn lecturers outline the final abilities of students, criteria/indicators of achievement, learning materials, learning methods, allocation of learning time, assessment of learning, student learning experiences/activities, learning media, and facilitators.

### **Strengthening Student Nationalism Through Citizenship Education at Timor University**

Nationalism is a sense of political togetherness that awakens the spirit of patriotism and a sense of belonging within a person towards their country and towards one another as a differentiator between one group and another (Olasupo, Oladeji, & Ijeoma, 2017). In line with this opinion, the importance of the spirit of nationalism for everyone is to help minimize the negative impacts of any changes in the era of globalization. With a high spirit of nationalism, individualism will not develop in daily life, thus maintaining the nation's morals. Nationalism is also very important in the life of the nation and state because it is a manifestation of love, pride, and respect for one's own nation. In agreement with the previous opinion, (Lestari, Janah, & Wardani, 2019) also argues that the following actions can be taken to foster nationalism among the younger generation: providing good examples and actions regarding respect and love for the nation and state by commemorating the struggles of the heroes for independence, providing guidance to children to ensure their growth and development proceed well in a conducive environment, and using domestic products. Preserving the culture that exists in one's own country so that it is not forgotten by the next generation of the nation, eliminating ethnocentric thinking in society because the Indonesian nation is a multicultural nation and must always be able to accept the existing differences, and be selective in filtering foreign cultures that enter the country, which is carried out in accordance with the application of Pancasila values. Research results show that Citizenship Education (PKn) plays a crucial role in strengthening nationalism among Unimor students. As an educational institution located in the border area of Indonesia and Timor Leste, Unimor has an important responsibility in shaping strong nationalism among its students. Strengthening nationalism through PKn at Unimor combines several important elements. First, the PKn curriculum is designed to provide a deep understanding of the history, culture, and values of Indonesia, with a special emphasis on the dynamics of border areas. Second, interactive and participatory teaching methods are applied to encourage students to explore and critically discuss citizenship issues.

Citizenship education is an integral part of the national education system. The Republic of Indonesia Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, specifically Article 35, has established Citizenship Education as a mandatory subject for students at all universities in Indonesia. The implementation of this subject is then detailed through the Decree of the Director General of Higher Education Number 84/E/KPT/2020. Furthermore, the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture

Number 3/M/2021 has established Key Performance Indicators (IKU) for State Universities and Higher Education Service Institutions. This decree mandates the use of innovative learning methods, namely case studies and project-based team learning, with a weight of assessment reaching 50% of the total evaluation. Citizenship education is a national mandatory subject that must be taken by all students at both diploma and undergraduate levels. This subject plays a strategic role in preparing intelligent, responsible, and civilized citizens (Pahlevi, 2017). In line with this opinion, the citizenship education subject has become one of the mandatory subjects taken by all students from various study programs at Unimor. In the citizenship education class for the agrotechnology and biology study programs, citizenship education is conducted in person in the classrooms of their respective programs. Modupeola & Adebisi (2012) argue that fostering a sense of national defense among students should be done using a participatory approach, which is more effective than conventional teaching methods in encouraging students' knowledge acquisition about citizenship issues and also reveals that the main effect of treatment on attitudes is not significant. In line with the previous opinion, Fibriana (2018) argues that the learning methods applied in citizenship education should be designed and directed so that students have high motivation and enthusiasm in learning, because high motivation in learning can help students develop various citizenship competencies, both knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Overview of the Learning Process in Civic Education in general, the learning process of Civic Education (PKn) is carried out by applying several learning methods while considering the classroom conditions and the different characteristics of students. Several learning methods applied in the PKn learning process include lecture methods, presentations, group discussions, project-based learning, and direct learning methods. These learning methods are designed to actively involve students in the learning process. The lecture method is conducted by the lecturer asking questions orally to the students, who are then given the opportunity to answer orally as well. The same method can also be applied with students asking questions and the lecturer answering the students' questions orally. The discussion method provides students with ample opportunities to deepen their knowledge. When examining topics such as the insight of the archipelago, students are encouraged to conduct in-depth research, analyze various sources of information, and critically process data (Fibriana, 2018). The presentation and discussion method is conducted by the lecturer providing several discussion topics to students who have been divided into several groups. Each group will receive a different topic from other groups. Students are assigned to create a paper on the given discussion topic, which will then be presented during the class learning session. After presenting the material, other students are given the opportunity to ask questions to the presenting group, and the presenting group will answer those questions. After the Q&A session, the presenting group will make conclusions based on the discussion results. The lecturer provides reinforcement and further explanations related to the material discussed in the conducted discussion.

The lecturer also applies direct learning methods in PKn learning. The direct learning applied by the citizenship education lecturer at Unimor aims for students to apply the knowledge gained in activities within the community environment. In the application of this method, students learn directly from community life by visiting targeted villages. Students participating in direct learning in border areas have the opportunity to directly observe the life of border communities, understand the dynamics of social interactions between cultures, and recognize the challenges and potentials present in border areas. The opportunity for direct learning becomes a chance for students to apply the theories obtained during lectures. In the PKn learning conducted in the field, agrotechnology students visit farmers and observe the habits of the community in dry land farming. Students are asked to observe the local wisdom still used by farmers in farming, analyze the challenges faced, and provide solutions through direct interaction with local farmers. Students are encouraged to reflect on and share their experiences related to life in border areas, which are then analyzed in the context of nationalism and citizenship. This learning process aims not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape the attitudes and skills necessary to become active and responsible citizens in border areas. Through this approach, it is hoped that students can develop a deep and contextual understanding of nationalism, as well as the ability to apply it in everyday life in border areas.

Other lecturers also apply project-based learning models. Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins (2016) explain that project-based learning is an educational approach that places students at the center of learning activities. The project-based learning model in civic education (PKn) is an effective approach to strengthen nationalism among students. This method involves students in practical activities directly related to citizenship issues and national identity. Students are asked to design citizenship campaigns using various tools and materials that can be utilized. Through projects like this, students not only learn the concept of nationalism theoretically but also experience and apply it directly. This process helps them understand more deeply about national identity, increases pride in the country, and develops practical skills in promoting national values. The project-based learning approach also encourages creativity, teamwork, and critical thinking, all of which are important in shaping active and responsible citizens. Guo, Saab, Post, & Admiraal (2020) argue that project-based learning is considered a highly potential method to improve the quality and effectiveness of the teaching and learning process at the higher education level. Civic education in higher education is formal education that has a central position in improving the quality of education in Indonesia, especially in building student character in preparation for the younger generation to face the era of society 5.0 (Widiatmaka, 2021). In line with the previous opinion, the implementation of civic education at Unimor is more focused on character development for students to become good citizens in community life. Students are not only equipped with knowledge and skills but also given reinforcement to form a positive character in national and state life. In line with the previous opinion, according to Broom (2017), civic education essentially includes education that demands critical thinking, requiring youth to explore what they believe, trust, and what the impact of those beliefs is for the future of the nation and state. This aims to help students understand the problems occurring in the community and strive to empower them, especially in terms of knowledge, active and critical thinking, and their direct contributions. This, indirectly, will connect students with partners or agents of civic education such as schools and communities, thus creating active and sustainable civic education.

### **Challenges and Obstacles in Strengthening Student Nationalism Through Civic Education at Timor University**

Strengthening student nationalism through Civic Education (PKn) at Unimor faces several unique challenges and obstacles, considering its position as a higher education institution in the border area of Indonesia and Timor Leste. These challenges include various aspects, ranging from infrastructure to shifts in students' perceptions of nationalism in the global era. Fauziah & Dewi (2021) argue that nationalism in Indonesia is integralistic nationalism, which does not differentiate citizens based on groups or others. The nationalistic ideology is an ideology that. Expressing the highest loyalty to worldly issues from every citizen of the state, directed towards the state and nation. Based on the results of observations, one of the challenges in strengthening student nationalism at Unimor is the complexity of cultural identity in border areas. Most students have familial ties with citizens from Timor Leste. The community in the border area also shares cultural similarities with some communities in Timor Leste, such as regional languages. They usually communicate using regional languages such as Dawan and Tetun. In addition, the limited resources and educational infrastructure in border areas also pose significant obstacles. Limited access to current learning materials, educational technology, and opportunities to interact with students from other regions in Indonesia can restrict students' perspectives. Unimor, like many institutions in border areas, faces limitations in terms of physical facilities. This includes a lack of adequate classrooms, limited equipment that supports learning, laptops, and limited internet access. The lack of adequate classrooms impacts the learning process, making the classroom environment less conducive. Limitations in hardware such as projectors become one of the obstacles in civic education learning in the classroom and reduce the effectiveness of civic education teaching.

The limitations of learning infrastructure, such as inadequate classrooms and teaching aids, also become obstacles in delivering Citizenship Education material effectively. This can reduce students' interest and understanding of the importance of nationalism in the context of statehood (Subagio, Yulianto, Prasetyo, & Muharam, 2022). The limitations of classrooms and tools in learning become

another obstacle in strengthening student nationalism through civic education. Inadequate infrastructure can reduce the effectiveness of civic education teaching, especially in applying interactive and innovative learning methods that are essential to attract students' interest in nationalism topics. These limitations can also hinder the use of modern educational technology that has the potential to enrich the learning experience and make nationalism material more relevant and engaging for the digital generation of students.

This nationalism faces several heavy challenges, namely modernization and globalization (Fauziah & Dewi, 2021). Globalization, with all its complexities, poses significant challenges to strengthening student nationalism at Unimor through Citizenship Education (Civic Education) and extracurricular programs. The unstoppable flow of global information through digital media often promotes lifestyles and values that differ, even contradict, the national values that are sought to be instilled through Civic Education. As a result, students experience an identity crisis, where they feel torn between local, national, and global identities. Dahliyana, Nurdin, Budimansyah, et al. (2020) explain that with the currents of globalization and modernization of the world, a country will become increasingly vulnerable to disruption, not only in developing countries but also in developed countries facing such threats, both from outside and from within the country itself. The influence of globalization and the ease of access to information through digital media also create their own challenges. Widespread internet access opens the door for students to connect with the global world, which can indirectly influence students' perspectives on nationalism. Students Can Easily Be Exposed to Various Ideologies, Alternative Historical Narratives, and Global Values That Are Not Aligned or Even Contradict Nationalism Principles Taught in Civic Education.

### **Efforts to Face Challenges and Obstacles in Strengthening Student Nationalism Through Citizenship Education at Timor University**

The Citizenship Education course at the higher education level plays an important role in shaping students into citizens who have critical, participatory, and responsible thinking. To achieve this goal, various approaches and learning methods have been formulated and implemented at various universities in Indonesia. These learning strategies not only focus on delivering information but are also designed to develop competencies, values, and essential attitudes for students in facing the complexities of community, nation, and state life. In facing various challenges and obstacles to strengthening student nationalism at Unimor, several strategic efforts have been implemented through the Citizenship Education (Civic Education) course. One of the main focuses is the development of more innovative and contextually relevant learning methods. Methods such as project-based learning, interactive group discussions, and case studies related to border issues have been applied to enhance active student engagement in the learning process. Emphasis on the importance of Civic Education in strengthening nationalism has also become a priority. Civic Education lecturers at Unimor have sought to connect learning materials with the realities of life in border areas, so that students can better understand the relevance of nationalism values in the context of their daily lives. This is done through discussions of local case studies, field visits to border areas, and discussions about their roles as citizens in strategic regions. Efforts to strengthen knowledge, skills, and attitudes have also become a focus in the development of the Civic Education curriculum. Knowledge aspects are reinforced through the delivery of comprehensive material on history, the constitution, and the Indonesian government system. Skill aspects are developed through practical activities such as simulations of state problem-solving and simple research projects on border issues. Meanwhile, attitude aspects are formed through activities that promote values of patriotism, tolerance, and social responsibility.

## Conclusion

Strengthening student nationalism through Citizenship Education is carried out by applying effective learning methods, namely lectures, discussions, direct learning, and project-based learning. Challenges and obstacles in strengthening student nationalism through citizenship education at Unimor are caused by various factors. The challenges and barriers to strengthening student nationalism through citizenship education include the complexity of cultural identity in border areas, limited classroom space and supporting facilities in the learning process, as well as rapid technological development. Efforts are being made to face the challenges and obstacles in strengthening nationalism. Students Through Citizenship Education in the Border Areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste Conducted with several activities, namely; the development of more effective learning methods, strengthening skills, knowledge, and attitudes through the empowerment program of nationalistic values.

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