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The Role of Civic Spirituality in Strengthening Socio-Cultural Values to Support SDGs in Education

Sukron Mazid^{1*}, Novitasari², Achmad Busrotun Nufus³, Delfiyan Widiyanto⁴, Ni'matu Sholikhah⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Universitas Tidar, Magelang, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the role of civic spirituality in strengthening socio-cultural values to support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation in education. Using a qualitative field study approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of learning activities. Findings indicate that civic spiritual values integrated into learning activities and school culture effectively strengthen socio-cultural values including mutual cooperation, tolerance, discipline, and responsibility. This integration is realized through habituation activities, subject integration, and cultural practices supporting character formation. Civic spirituality also enhances student awareness of diversity, social responsibility, and global citizenship, aligning with SDGs principles of quality and inclusive education. Success factors include active teacher involvement, a conducive school environment, and relevant local cultural support. The study recommends systematic integration of civic spirituality into curricula and educational practices to advance SDGs achievement, positioning it as a strategic approach beyond cognitive learning toward sustainable character development.

[Penelitian ini mengkaji peran spiritualitas kewarganegaraan dalam memperkuat nilai-nilai sosio-budaya guna mendukung implementasi Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) di bidang pendidikan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi lapangan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan siswa, serta dokumentasi kegiatan pembelajaran. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai spiritualitas kewarganegaraan yang diintegrasikan ke dalam kegiatan pembelajaran dan budaya sekolah secara efektif memperkuat nilai-nilai sosio-budaya, termasuk kerja sama tim, toleransi, disiplin, dan tanggung jawab. Integrasi ini diwujudkan melalui kegiatan pembiasaan, integrasi mata pelajaran, dan praktik budaya yang mendukung pembentukan karakter. Spiritualitas kewarganegaraan juga meningkatkan kesadaran siswa akan keragaman, tanggung jawab sosial, dan kewarganegaraan global, sejalan dengan prinsip-prinsip SDGs mengenai pendidikan berkualitas dan inklusif. Faktor-faktor keberhasilan meliputi keterlibatan guru yang aktif, lingkungan sekolah yang kondusif, dan dukungan budaya lokal yang relevan. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan integrasi sistematis spiritualitas kewarganegaraan ke dalam kurikulum dan praktik pendidikan untuk memajukan pencapaian SDGs, dengan memosisikannya sebagai pendekatan strategis yang melampaui pembelajaran kognitif menuju pengembangan karakter yang berkelanjutan.] © The Authors.

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*Corresponding Author:

Sukron Mazid

Universitas Tidar

Jl. Kapten Suparman No.39, Potrobangsari, Kec. Magelang Utara, Kota Magelang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia

sukronmazid@untidar.ac.id

1. Introduction

Rapidly changing global landscape, many nations continue to face persistent challenges in producing human resources who are not only intellectually competent but also equipped with strong character, ethical values, and a sense of social responsibility. These challenges are reflected in rising rates of youth unemployment, moral degradation, and weakening social cohesion observed across various societies [fakta/data empiris]. Responding to this reality, education is increasingly recognized as a strategic instrument for shaping well-rounded individuals. As affirmed by UNESCO (2021), education must go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills. It must also cultivate the capacity for critical thinking, ethical action, and meaningful contribution to community life [2]. Scholars further argue that this goal can only be achieved when educational systems are designed holistically, integrating intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions in a balanced and purposeful manner [1, 3].

It is hoped that a generation will emerge that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses empathy, responsibility, and concern for the surrounding environment. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the fourth goal, quality education, emphasizes the importance of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education [4] [5]. The implementation of sustainable education focuses not only on academic achievement but also on strengthening socio-cultural values and character building of students as an integral part of the educational process [6]. This includes instilling values of tolerance, diversity, and awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability and social justice [6]. Thus, sustainable education is a crucial foundation for creating a society that is not only knowledgeable but also possesses strong character and is capable of facing future global challenges.

The reality on the ground shows that the development of globalization and modernization has had a significant impact on changes in socio-cultural values within society [7] [8]. The rapid flow of information and increasingly intense cross-cultural interactions have influenced the mindsets and behaviors of individuals, particularly the younger generation [9]. Phenomena such as the decline of mutual cooperation, increasing individualism, and diminishing tolerance pose serious challenges in the world of education [10]. This indicates a shift in values that previously served as the foundation of social life, thus requiring special attention from various parties, especially educational institutions as agents of character formation [11] [12].

This situation indicates that education has not yet been fully able to optimally internalize socio-cultural values in students. The learning process, which tends to focus on academic achievement, often neglects the formation of attitudes and values [13]. Therefore, a more comprehensive educational approach is needed, one that not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also addresses the affective and spiritual dimensions of character development. Integrating socio-cultural values into the curriculum, learning methods, and school environment is a crucial step [14]. This is especially important to create a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses strong social sensitivity and moral integrity.

In this context, the concept of civic spirituality becomes relevant to study as an alternative approach to education capable of addressing the challenges of the values crisis in the modern era. Civic spirituality is the integration of civic values and the spiritual dimension, emphasizing moral awareness, ethics, social responsibility, and respect for diversity [15]. This approach not only shapes students as law-abiding citizens but also as individuals with spiritual depth and social sensitivity [15]. Through the application of civic spirituality, values such as tolerance, solidarity, mutual cooperation, and social awareness can be instilled in a more contextual and meaningful way in students' daily lives.

Furthermore, strengthening socio-cultural values based on civic spirituality is closely linked to efforts to achieve the SDGs in education [16]. Education that integrates civic and spiritual values not only produces individuals who excel intellectually but also develop an awareness of being responsible and ethical global citizens [17]. This aligns with the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasizes character development, global literacy, and social competencies that adapt to changing times [18]. Thus, a civic spiritual approach can be a crucial foundation for realizing sustainable education that is not only oriented toward knowledge but also toward the development of holistic and globally competitive individuals.

However, the implementation of civic spirituality in educational practice still faces various challenges, such as limited educator understanding, lack of integration into the curriculum, and a lack of applicable learning models. Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed regarding the role of civic spirituality in strengthening socio-cultural values and its contribution to supporting the SDGs agenda in education. Educational studies show that strengthening character and socio-cultural

values has become a primary focus in various studies, particularly within the framework of 21st-century education and the achievement of the SDGs in education. Various approaches, such as character education [19] [20], multicultural education [21] [22], and citizenship education [23] [24], have been developed to instill values such as tolerance, social justice, and civic responsibility. Furthermore, the integration of local values and cultural wisdom has begun to receive attention as an effort to maintain identity amidst globalization [25]. However, most of these approaches still tend to separate the cognitive, social, and spiritual dimensions, thus failing to fully impact the holistic development of students' character.

Based on these conditions, there is a gap between the ideal concept of sustainable education and practice in the field. Although the curriculum has accommodated character and socio-cultural values, its implementation is often still formal and does not address the dimension of value internalization in depth [26] [27]. Furthermore, the approaches used tend to be oriented towards the cognitive aspect and do not integrate the spiritual dimension as a moral foundation in shaping behavior. As a result, socio-cultural values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance and solidarity have not been strongly internalized in students, so they have not been able to answer the challenges of value degradation in the era of globalization [28].

This research stems from the weak internalization of socio-cultural values within the existing education system, particularly in addressing the dynamics of social change resulting from globalization and modernization. Education has not yet fully developed individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess a high level of moral, spiritual, and social responsibility [29]. Therefore, an approach is needed that systematically integrates civic and spiritual values into the educational process. The main issue raised is how the role of civic spirituality can be optimized in strengthening students' socio-cultural values to support the achievement of sustainable development goals in education.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of the civic spiritual concept as an integrative approach that combines civic and spiritual dimensions in strengthening socio-cultural values. Unlike previous research that tends to separate aspects of character, citizenship, and spirituality, this research offers a more holistic and contextual conceptual framework [17] [30]. The civic spiritual approach focuses not only on developing civic knowledge and attitudes but also on strengthening inner awareness, which forms the basis of ethical social behavior [31] [32]. Thus, this research is expected to provide new contributions to the development of educational theory and practice oriented toward holistic character formation and supporting the implementation of sustainable education in accordance with the SDGs. Based on this description, this research is crucial to comprehensively examine the role of civic spirituality in strengthening socio-cultural values as an effort to support the implementation of sustainable education. The research findings are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of educational models oriented toward values, character, and sustainability.

2. Method

This study used a qualitative approach with a field research type that aims to understand in depth the role of civic spirituality in strengthening socio-cultural values to support the implementation of sustainable education within the SDGs framework in the school environment. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to explore the meaning, values, and social practices that occur naturally in the educational context, thus providing a comprehensive and contextual picture of the phenomenon studied [33]. The research location was carried out at SMP N 2 Sawangan Magelang with research subjects including Civics and Religion teachers, seventh-grade students, and the principal who were selected through a purposive sampling technique based on their involvement and understanding of the implementation of civic spiritual values. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation to observe learning activities and social interactions at school, in-depth interviews to explore the understanding and practice of socio-cultural values, and documentation in the form of curriculum, school programs, and related archives. Data analysis used a qualitative descriptive approach through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to produce systematic interpretations. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checks with informants to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. The research procedure was carried out in stages, encompassing preparation, field data collection, analysis, and report preparation. This research is expected to contribute to the development of sustainable socio-cultural values-based education.

3. Results

3.1. Implementation of Civic Spirituality in Strengthening Socio-Cultural Values in the School Environment

The main results at SMP N 2 Sawangan, Magelang Regency, relate to the implementation of civic spirituality in the learning process and school culture. Civic spiritual values are not only conveyed conceptually but also systematically integrated into teaching and learning activities. Based on field observations, researchers observed that before entering school, students lined up to shake hands with teachers. Furthermore, before learning activities began, a communal prayer was held to strengthen spirituality. Integration of learning activities is evident in the way teachers link subject matter to relevant moral, social, and spiritual values, so that students not only understand the cognitive aspects but also develop ethical awareness and responsibility as citizens.

The implementation of civic spirituality is also reflected in the habituation of attitudes in daily life within the school environment. For example, there is a weekly community service/school cleanup activity, a collaboration between teachers and students. Values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, and discipline are part of concrete practices that are carried out continuously. Routine activities such as community service, mutual assistance among students, and compliance with school rules indicate that these values have been gradually internalized. Student habits play a crucial role in shaping the character of students who are not only academically intelligent but also socially sensitive [34].

Other results indicate that social interaction among school members is a crucial medium for strengthening civic spiritual values. Harmonious relationships between students, teachers, and educational staff create a conducive environment for the instillation of socio-cultural values. Mutual respect, open communication, and an inclusive culture demonstrate that civic spirituality is not only taught but also practiced in the dynamics of daily school life. Furthermore, the role of teachers and school policies has proven to be key factors in the successful internalization of these values. Teachers serve as both role models and facilitators in instilling civic spiritual values through a reflective and contextual learning approach. Furthermore, supportive school policies, such as character-building programs and values-based rules, provide a structural foundation that strengthens this implementation [35]. This synergy between individual roles and institutional policies makes civic spirituality an integral part of school culture. The following are the interview results, as presented in the table below.

Table 1. Interview Results on the Implementation of Civic Spirituality in Strengthening Socio-Cultural Values

Respondent	Interview Results Data	Data Reduction	Data Display	Verification/Conclusion
Principal	Stated that civic spiritual values are implemented through school programs such as character-building habits, religious activities, and disciplinary rules	Focus on school policies and value habituation programs	Implementation through policies, character programs, and school culture	School policies play an important role in supporting the internalization of civic spiritual values
Civics (PPKn) Teacher	Integrates civic spiritual values into Civics learning through discussions, case studies, and role modeling	Emphasis on integrating values into the learning process	Contextual learning based on social and spiritual values	Teachers are the main actors in instilling civic spiritual values in the classroom
Religion Teacher	Instills spiritual values through religious instruction, worship habits, and the development of students' morals	Focus on strengthening spiritual and moral values in religious activities	Routine religious activities and character building based on religious values	Religion teachers play a role in strengthening the spiritual dimension as the foundation of civic spiritual values
Students	Experience habituation such as mutual cooperation, respect for others, and social activities at school	Students' direct experiences with value practices	Real practices of social values such as tolerance, cooperation, and discipline	Civic spiritual values have been internalized through students' daily activities
Parents	Assess that the school helps shape children to become more disciplined, polite, and socially caring	Parents' perceptions of changes in children's behavior	Impact of implementation on children's character at home and in the community	The implementation of civic spiritual values has a positive impact on students' character development

Based on interviews with various respondents, the implementation of civic spiritual values at SMP N 2 Sawangan, Magelang Regency, is integrated through policies, learning, and daily practices. The principal plays a role in designing policies and character-building programs that form the basis for internalizing these values, while the PPKn teacher integrates them into the learning process through contextual methods such as discussions and case studies, as well as role models. The religious education teacher strengthens the spiritual dimension through religious activities, fostering worship habits, and fostering moral character in students. Students also experience the implementation of these values directly through daily activities such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, cooperation, and discipline, demonstrating that civic spiritual values have been internalized in school life. Parents also acknowledge positive changes in their children's attitudes, such as becoming more disciplined, polite, and caring towards the social environment. Thus, the collaboration between school policies, teachers' roles, students' experiences, and parental support demonstrates that civic spirituality has a real impact on strengthening students' character and socio-cultural values.

3.2. Contributions and Challenges of Civic Spirituality in Supporting Sustainable Education (SDGs)

The contribution of civic spirituality implementation to the achievement of sustainable education, particularly at SMP N 2 Sawangan, Magelang Regency, demonstrates that the integration of civic spirituality values into the learning process can shape students' character with a strong social awareness. Students not only understand the concept of citizenship theoretically but are also able to internalize the values of caring, justice, and sustainability in their daily lives [34]. This serves as an important foundation in supporting the goals of sustainable education, which emphasize a balance between cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects.

The implementation of civic spirituality plays a significant role in fostering an attitude of tolerance and global responsibility [15]. Through learning that integrates spiritual and social values, students are encouraged to appreciate diversity and develop a broader perspective on global issues. This attitude is reflected in their ability to interact inclusively and demonstrate empathy for differences. Thus, civic spirituality not only contributes to the formation of local character but also equips students with the competencies to become responsible global citizens. As seen in interviews with several informants, as follows.

Table 2. Interview Results on Contributions and Challenges of Civic Spirituality in (SDGs)

Respondent	Interview Results Data	Data Reduction	Data Display	Verification
Head of Education Office	Stated that civic spiritual values are important in supporting sustainable education through character-strengthening policies, but there are still obstacles in implementation at schools	Focus on policies, institutional support, and implementation challenges	The role of policy in promoting value-based sustainable education	Policy support exists, but implementation is still uneven
Principal	Revealed that the school has implemented civic spiritual values through character programs, but faces challenges in consistency and involvement of all parties	Emphasis on school-level implementation and internal obstacles	School programs and implementation challenges	Implementation is ongoing, but needs stronger collaboration and consistency
Civics (PPKn) Teacher	Explained that civic spiritual values are integrated into learning, but constrained by limited conceptual understanding and time restrictions in the curriculum	Focus on the learning process and technical constraints	Integration of values in learning and curriculum limitations	Teachers play an important role, but need improved competence and curriculum support
Religion Teacher	Stated that spiritual values are the foundation for building sustainable character, but face challenges in linking them with global issues and contemporary contexts	Focus on strengthening spiritual values and contextualization challenges	Teaching religious values and challenges in relevance to global education	More contextual integration between spiritual values and global sustainability issues is needed

Respondent	Interview Results Data	Data Reduction	Data Display	Verification
Students	Feel benefits such as increased social awareness and tolerance, but are influenced by external environments and social media	Students' experiences and external influences	Positive impacts and challenges from the global environment	Civic spiritual values have a positive impact, but are influenced by external factors

Based on interviews with various respondents, it can be concluded that civic spirituality plays a crucial role in supporting sustainable education, particularly through strengthening character and socio-cultural values. While policy support from the Education Office in Magelang Regency demonstrates institutional commitment, its implementation in schools remains uneven and faces various obstacles. At the school level, particularly at SMP N 2 Sawangan, a character-based program has been implemented, but it still requires consistency and the involvement of the entire school community. Civics and Citizenship Education teachers have integrated civic spirituality into their learning process, despite time constraints and limited conceptual understanding. Religious education teachers play a role in strengthening spiritual values but still face challenges in linking them to relevant global issues. Students, on the other hand, experience positive impacts in the form of increased social awareness and tolerance, although external influences and social media pose challenges. Therefore, strengthening collaboration, improving educator competency, and more contextual integration are needed to ensure a more effective and equitable implementation of civic spirituality in supporting sustainable education goals.

4. Discussion

The implementation of civic spirituality in strengthening socio-cultural values in the school environment can be understood through the perspectives of character education and social constructivism. Within this framework, values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, and responsibility are not only transmitted cognitively but also constructed through social interactions and meaningful learning experiences cognitively but also constructed through social interactions and meaningful learning experiences [17]. Social constructivism emphasizes that learning occurs through the process of internalizing values in a social context [36]. Therefore, habitual practices, teacher role models, and school culture become the primary means of shaping students' character, serving as a bridge between spiritual values and contextualized citizenship practices in everyday school life.

However, its implementation faces several obstacles that require attention. Teachers' limited understanding of civic spirituality is a major barrier, preventing optimal integration into learning. Furthermore, the curriculum structure, which does not fully support holistic value integration, and the influence of globalization, which tends to encourage individualism, also pose challenges to consistently instilling these values in the school environment [16]. To overcome these barriers, a focused and sustainable strategy is needed. Improving teacher competency through training and strengthening literacy in this concept is a crucial step toward optimization. Furthermore, developing an integrative curriculum and strengthening synergy between schools, families, and communities can support value internalization more effectively. With a comprehensive approach, civic spirituality can play an optimal role in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in shaping a generation with character, tolerance, and global responsibility [4]. The following is a picture of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which consist of 17 global goals.



Figure 1. Image of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs, comprising 17 global goals, demonstrate that education plays a central role in building an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable society. In the context of "The Role of Civic Spirituality in Strengthening Socio-Cultural Values to Support SDGs in Education," this approach is particularly relevant to quality education (Goal 4), reducing inequality (Goal 10), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16). Through the integration of spiritual and civic values, students are not only equipped with academic knowledge but also instilled with social awareness, tolerance, and responsibility. This directly impacts the formation of a generation capable of appreciating diversity and contributing to sustainable social harmony. The following is the distribution of civic spiritual values in the image below.

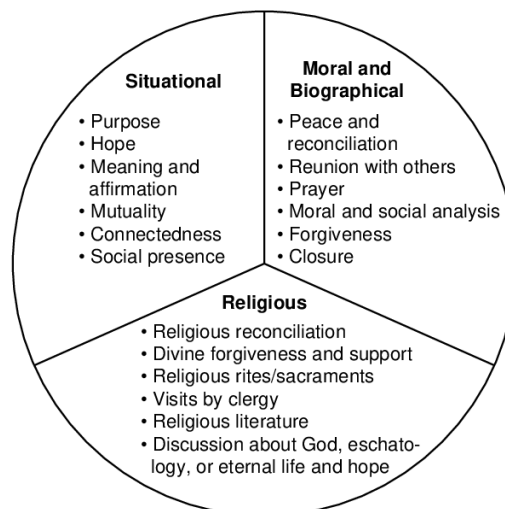


Figure 2: Dimension of Spiritual Needs [37].

Spiritual values oriented toward inner peace, strengthening relationships with God, and improving quality of life through religious practices and social support are closely linked to civic spirituality's role in strengthening socio-cultural values in education. This approach emphasizes not only individual religiosity but also how these values are embodied in communal life as a form of civic responsibility [17]. In the educational context, this is reflected in developing students' integrity, empathy, and ability to live harmoniously within diversity. Consequently, practices such as self-reflection, prayer, and community involvement serve as means to instill tolerance, mutual cooperation, and social awareness — essential components of socio-cultural formation.

The contribution of civic spirituality in supporting sustainable education can be linked to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) theory, which emphasizes developing competencies including global awareness, social responsibility, and critical thinking regarding sustainability [38]. Civic spirituality strengthens the affective and ethical dimensions of ESD, enabling students to not only understand global issues but also develop a moral commitment to act sustainably [17]. Therefore, it contributes to developing individuals who are intellectually capable while also possessing integrity and concern for the social and global environment. Nevertheless, its implementation faces challenges analyzable through theories of social change and globalization.

The currents of globalization, which bring individualism and pragmatism, often conflict with the collective and spiritual values intended to be instilled in schools. Teachers' limited understanding and insufficient curriculum integration indicate a gap between concept and practice [34]. Therefore, strategies grounded in transformational learning theory are needed, emphasizing mindset shifts through critical reflection and real-life experiences [39]. Through strengthened teacher capacity, holistic curriculum design, and collaboration between schools, families, and communities, civic spirituality can be optimized as a relevant approach to achieving sustainable development goals. Civic spirituality plays a strategic role in strengthening socio-cultural values as a foundation for comprehensive SDG achievement. Values such as mutual cooperation, caring, and global responsibility encourage students to actively participate in addressing social, environmental, and humanitarian challenges [9]. In practice, its implementation can shape character that is not only adaptive to global change but also morally committed to sustainability. Consequently, education becomes not merely a transfer of knowledge but a process of value transformation producing individuals with integrity, empathy, and readiness to contribute to sustainable development at local and global levels [9].

Strengthening civic spirituality directly supports SDG achievement in education, particularly in realizing inclusive, quality, and sustainable learning. The integration of spiritual values with social support creates an environment focused not only on cognitive aspects but also on students' emotional and social well-being [40]. Collaboration between educational institutions, families, and communities is key to building an ecosystem that supports holistic individual development. Thus, civic spirituality serves as a foundation in shaping a generation that is intellectually capable while also possessing strong moral and social awareness to contribute to sustainable development.

Theoretically, civic spirituality enriches educational scholarship by integrating character education, citizenship education, and spiritual values within the ESD framework, adding a moral-ethical dimension to social constructivist approaches. It confirms that socio-cultural value formation is inseparable from spirituality in developing students' holistic character, positioning civic spirituality as a relevant conceptual response to 21st-century challenges including global awareness, social responsibility, and sustainability. Practically, teachers need competencies to contextually integrate these values into learning, while schools must develop institutional cultures supporting consistent value inculcation. Policymakers can use these findings to formulate more holistic, SDGs-oriented curricula. Through synergy among teachers, schools, families, and communities, civic spirituality can effectively shape students who are characterful, tolerant, and globally responsible.

5. Conclusion

The integration of civic spirituality into citizenship education significantly contributes to students' character formation. Civic spiritual values applied through habituation, subject integration, and school cultural practices have proven effective in strengthening socio-cultural values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, discipline, and responsibility within a positive and inclusive educational environment. Beyond moral development, civic spirituality builds students' awareness of diversity, empathy, mutual respect, and collaborative competencies essential for pluralistic and global life, while fostering a sense of individual responsibility toward sustainable development. These outcomes position civic spirituality as a strategic approach in advancing SDGs achievement, particularly quality and inclusive education, producing generations that excel not only academically but also socially, culturally, and globally. Effective implementation requires curriculum integration through values-based and experiential learning, supported by conducive school cultures and responsive government policies. Future research should develop and empirically test applicable civic spirituality models across diverse educational contexts.

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Informed Consent

Privacy protection is a legal right that requires informed consent. In this study, all participants were informed about the research and gave their consent. As the participants were students of SMP N 2 Sawangan, Magelang Regency, consent was also obtained from parents or guardians, and all personal data were kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

Ethical Approval

The research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee

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