

Citizenship Education as A Strategy to Prevent Health Hoaxes Among Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of health-related misinformation in the digital era underscores the strategic role of Civic Education in shaping the character and critical awareness of nursing students. Positioned at the intersection of health communication and public trust, nursing students are not only susceptible to digital misinformation but also bear the ethical responsibility of serving as credible information disseminators. This study explores the potential of Civic Education to enhance ethical reasoning, social responsibility, and critical literacy among nursing students, thereby equipping them to counter health hoaxes effectively. Employing a literature review approach, this research highlights the importance of integrating civic values such as critical thinking, digital citizenship, and moral responsibility into nursing education. The findings suggest that fostering reflective and analytical competencies within Civic Education can empower nursing students to verify information objectively, resist disinformation, and act as agents of change in cultivating a health-literate and hoax-resilient society. The internalization of civic values is thus a crucial foundation for developing health professionals who are not only technically proficient but also socially accountable and ethically grounded.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, Civic Education no longer serves a purely normative role, but has evolved into a critical and applicative domain for preparing the younger generation to navigate complex socio-digital challenges. One of its core contributions lies in cultivating critical literacy—the capacity to recognize, evaluate, and responsibly utilize information amidst the growing landscape of digital content. This competency is essential for fostering student resilience against misleading or manipulated narratives that increasingly permeate online environments (Hamidah & Setiawan, 2021).

Civic Education plays a pivotal role in enabling individuals to comprehend and respond to emerging social issues, especially those amplified by digital communication technologies. In the context of higher education, particularly among students, this field contributes to the development of analytical thinking, ethical judgment, digital discernment, and responsible

communication. Through Civic Education, students gain not only the knowledge to interact with information critically, but also the moral foundation to contribute constructively to the information ecosystem (Al Khansa et al., 2024).

The widespread penetration of digital platforms—especially social media—has accelerated the dissemination of both accurate and false information. The phenomenon of hoaxes is not new; historical traces can be found as early as the 19th century, often used to provoke thought or satire. However, in today's hyper-connected society, the capacity for anyone to create and distribute content at scale has amplified the reach and impact of misinformation (Praptiningsih & Kurnia, 2020). This shift has created a volatile informational environment where discerning truth from falsehood becomes increasingly challenging.

The spread of health-related hoaxes presents serious public health risks. False claims surrounding diseases, vaccines, or treatments can distort public perception, influence medical decisions, and potentially endanger lives (Pillai & Fazio, 2021). These narratives are often disguised in pseudo-scientific language, leveraging public fears and anxieties particularly during pandemics or health crises. Consequently, digital literacy alone is insufficient. There is an urgent need to strengthen civic values such as critical awareness, ethical responsibility, and social vigilance especially within health education (Sinta, 2020).

Nursing students occupy a dual role in this landscape: as potential victims of digital misinformation, and simultaneously, as credible actors in health communication. With appropriate Civic Education, nursing students can develop the competencies necessary to verify information, counter hoaxes, and act as agents of accurate health advocacy. This dual capacity is crucial in shaping a society that is not only informed, but also resistant to manipulation and more critical of its information sources.

In higher education, particularly in health-related programs, students are not merely expected to master technical and academic competencies. They are also called to embody civic values moral integrity, public accountability, and the capacity to engage with information ethically and critically. Civic Education, therefore, is not ancillary but foundational in shaping nursing students into holistic health professionals who are prepared to serve not just clinically, but socially and communicatively.

Despite the growing discourse on digital literacy and health misinformation, there is a limited focus on the role of Civic Education as a strategic framework to equip nursing students in resisting and counteracting health hoaxes. Most existing interventions emphasize technical skills or fact-checking training, while the deeper cultivation of ethical reasoning, civic responsibility, and critical public engagement remains underexplored in nursing curricula. Thus, this study is guided by the following problem formulation, How can Civic Education serve as an effective strategy to prevent the spread of health hoaxes among nursing students in the digital era?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Civic Education

According to (Zulfikar & Dewi, 2021) Civic Education is an integral part of the comprehensive national education system. Therefore, this subject is included in the curriculum and learning at all levels of education, from elementary school to college. The function and role of Civic Education are directed to support the achievement of national education goals. The object of study in Civic Education covers all aspects related to citizens, both empirical and non-empirical. These aspects include the insights, attitudes, and behavior of citizens in the context of national and state life in a unified whole (Bukoting, 2023)

2. 2. Definition of Hoax

Hoax is false or misleading information that is created and distributed for a specific purpose, such as to influence public opinion, deceive, or create unrest (Satria, 2023). In the digital era, hoaxes spread very quickly through social media and other communication platforms due to the high access to information that is not always followed by a verification process. Hoaxes can be news, images, videos, or narratives that seem convincing but are not based on facts. In the health sector, hoaxes can have serious impacts because they can cause panic, lead to errors in decision-making, and even endanger safety (Bednarczyk & Kopczewski, 2023).

2. 3. Related Studies

Research conducted by Amir et al. (2025) shows that the post-truth era, marked by the rise of hoaxes and disinformation, is a major challenge for the younger generation in Indonesia. In this context, Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) plays an important role in equipping students with critical literacy to deal with unverified information. The integration of Pancasila values into the curriculum has been proven to increase social awareness and build information resilience. Innovative learning approaches, such as case discussions and the use of technology, are effective in increasing student engagement. Values such as justice and tolerance also encourage selective and responsible attitudes in disseminating information.

Furthermore, research by Putra et al. (2020) explains that the literature on Civic Education in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that the complexity of current education and life problems is a very relevant issue. In this context, civic education plays a role as a gateway to forming good citizen qualities, which are greatly needed amidst the challenges faced by the Indonesian nation. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of life, including the way education is implemented, thus requiring rapid and appropriate adaptation to ensure that civic values can still be taught and internalized. Research shows that civic education not only functions to equip students with knowledge of the rights and obligations of citizens, but also to build character and attitudes that reflect the values of Pancasila. In this regard, several studies emphasize the importance of internalizing Pancasila values in education to create good citizenship, especially in times of crisis. A clear and focused direction of civic education is very important to form citizens who not only understand their rights and obligations, but also have social awareness and responsibility in facing existing challenges, including the spread of incorrect information in the digital era. This shows that citizenship education must adapt to the times and the challenges faced, in order to contribute effectively to creating a better and more resilient society.

Organisasi Suryaniningsih (2020) Literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of civic literacy shows that the announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, declaring COVID-19 a pandemic, marked the beginning of a major challenge for the global community, including Indonesia. The significant increase in cases and the rapid spread of the virus triggered a response from the government, including school closures and the implementation of the Work From Home (WFH) system. However, this situation also caused panic among the public, as seen from the phenomenon of panic buying and the spread of disturbing hoaxes. Hoaxes, which often come from unreliable sources, make things worse by creating uncertainty and anxiety in society. In this context, civic literacy becomes very important, because the knowledge and ability to participate effectively in national and state life can help individuals to filter the information they receive. Civic literacy, which should be in line with the values of Pancasila,

allows citizens to understand their rights and obligations and contribute to solving complex social problems, including the spread of misinformation. Research shows that increasing civic literacy can help people to be more critical in responding to news, thereby reducing the negative impact of hoaxes. Thus, strengthening civic literacy during the pandemic is not only important to face health challenges, but also to maintain national unity in the face of disinformation that can divide society.

3. Research Method

This study employs the literature review method as the primary approach to explore the role of Citizenship Education in building nursing students' resilience against health hoaxes. The choice of this method is based on the conceptual nature of the research, which seeks to examine both the theoretical and practical contributions of civic literacy in addressing health-related disinformation. This review draws upon various scholarly sources, including research journals, academic books, peer-reviewed scientific articles, and official documents from educational and health institutions. Literature searches were conducted systematically using several internationally recognized academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, employing keywords such as "citizenship education," "health hoaxes," "nursing students," "digital literacy," and "disinformation." The search was limited to publications from the last ten years (2014–2024) to ensure the recency and relevance of the findings. Once relevant sources were gathered, thematic classification was applied to organize the literature based on key issues, including the strengthening of civic values, the impact of health hoaxes on nursing students, and critical literacy strategies in the digital era.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative content analysis approach, which involved several steps: thematic classification, comparative analysis of expert perspectives, and integrative synthesis. Thematic classification was used to identify relevant conceptual patterns, while comparative analysis allowed for the examination of similarities and differences in viewpoints across the selected literature. The synthesis process aimed to formulate a conceptual framework on how Citizenship Education can be strategically integrated into higher nursing education to enhance resilience against health hoaxes. The validity and credibility of the analysis were ensured through the use of verified scholarly sources, a balanced presentation of diverse perspectives, and the formulation of conclusions grounded in consistent and logical argumentation.

4. Results and Discussion

Civic Education plays a central role in shaping students' character, instilling integrity, critical thinking, and a sense of social and national responsibility. These attributes are not merely abstract ideals but essential competencies for students navigating an information-saturated environment. For nursing students, this becomes even more critical, as they are expected not only to become competent healthcare professionals but also trusted sources of public health information. Civic Education, therefore, equips students with both moral judgment and analytical skills to discern the accuracy of information, especially in areas as sensitive and consequential as public health.

As part of a broader character-building framework, Citizenship Education integrates the values of nationalism, ethical consciousness, and accountability. It encourages students to act based on verified and accurate information, empowering them to resist and challenge the spread of health hoaxes. Nursing students are not passive recipients of information—they also serve as conduits for disseminating valid health knowledge to the public. In this context, the dual role of nursing students—as both consumers and producers of information—demands a pedagogical foundation that emphasizes ethical communication, critical evaluation, and civic responsibility.

Wibowo et al. (2022) highlight the importance of integrating digital literacy within the teaching of Pancasila and Citizenship Education, leveraging technological tools to enhance students' ability to detect and assess misinformation. This integration has been shown to significantly increase awareness among students about the dangers of misinformation and the ethical responsibilities tied to digital citizenship. In parallel, Setiawan and Yuliawati (2021) emphasize character education grounded in Pancasila values as an effective strategy to build students' moral resilience against the expanding waves of digital disinformation.

The critical thinking skills nurtured in Civic Education allow students to evaluate information not only based on its content but also considering the credibility of sources, contextual relevance, and the broader societal impact. Within nursing education, the educational role of students and health professionals cannot be overstated. Through Civic Education, students internalize the understanding that every piece of information shared carries ethical implications, especially when it involves public health. As such, the values of truthfulness, precision, and commitment to facts are core character traits that should be developed consistently. These values help transform nursing students into not only critical consumers of information but also responsible communicators and educators. Argo (2022) notes that such active roles contribute significantly to building an informed and resilient society capable of resisting misinformation.

The spread of health hoaxes is often driven by multifactorial causes—ranging from distrust in institutions and belief in conspiracy theories to ideological and political motives. Social media platforms, driven by engagement-based algorithms, serve as the primary vehicles for such hoaxes. These algorithms tend to amplify sensational content regardless of its factual accuracy, leading to rapid and wide dissemination (Oktaviani, 2021). Civic Education addresses this issue by teaching digital literacy as a component of civic responsibility. This form of literacy goes beyond mere technical skills to include ethical awareness in navigating digital environments. Nursing students, when equipped with these principles, are better positioned to help cultivate a healthier digital ecosystem particularly by acting as gatekeepers and correctors of misleading health information.

Beyond the formal curriculum, Civic Education must be seen as a preventive strategy that permeates the entire academic environment. When civic values are embedded into the daily routines of campus life through both structured coursework and informal interactions—a culture of vigilance and critical inquiry can flourish. Given their scientific training, nursing students are naturally positioned to defend factual medical knowledge. However, such efforts gain depth and effectiveness when paired with strong civic consciousness and ethical commitment (Montessori, 2021).

It is important to recognize that health hoaxes not only mislead the general public but also influence academic communities, including students and educators (Neylan et al., 2022). In such contexts, the ability to filter and respond appropriately to misinformation becomes a form of intellectual and civic maturity. Civic Education plays a pivotal role in fostering such maturity, encouraging rational responses to provocative content and promoting the identity of students as smart, ethical, and socially responsible digital citizens.

Furthermore, Citizenship Education fosters students' social awareness and civic engagement, encouraging them to participate in public education initiatives, clarify misleading narratives, and even spearhead social campaigns to counteract misinformation. This participatory aspect is particularly valuable in the health domain, where public trust is often built through peer education and grassroots outreach. Additionally, cross-disciplinary collaboration among students from public health, nursing, education, and communication—can create a

powerful collective response to information disorders, enhancing the overall resilience of the academic and broader social environment.

Civic Education, therefore, is not merely an abstract or auxiliary discipline. It serves as a strategic pillar in shaping the identity and competencies of future health professionals. By embedding civic values into the educational journey of nursing students, higher education institutions contribute to the development of graduates who are not only clinically and academically competent but also capable of navigating and correcting the complex information dynamics of the digital age.

The role of Citizenship Education in addressing health hoaxes is both preventive and transformative. It shields students from becoming victims of misinformation while simultaneously empowering them to act as agents of change. Through the internalization of civic values such as critical thinking, ethical communication, public accountability, and digital responsibility nursing students are equipped to serve as trustworthy communicators in their professional and personal spheres. These qualities are foundational for building an informed society and a resilient information ecosystem, both within academic settings and in the wider community.

5. Conclusion

Citizenship Education serves as an essential foundation for equipping nursing students with the critical skills and ethical orientation needed to identify, evaluate, and counter the spread of health hoaxes in the digital era. Through the integration of civic values such as integrity, accountability, and digital literacy, nursing students develop not only the ability to critically assess information but also the responsibility to disseminate accurate and trustworthy health knowledge. These capacities are vital in an information landscape where sensationalism and misinformation often override scientific fact.

Embedding Citizenship Education into the fabric of nursing education cultivates a generation of health professionals who are socially aware, morally grounded, and actively engaged in fostering public health resilience. When civic consciousness is nurtured through formal instruction and lived academic culture, nursing students become agents of change—empowered to resist disinformation and contribute meaningfully to building an informed, ethical, and critically literate society.

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