



The Role of Civic Education in Countering Cyberbullying

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Abstrak

Cyberbullying menjadi salah satu permasalahan yang semakin meningkat di kalangan pelajar seiring dengan tingginya penggunaan media sosial dan platform komunikasi digital. Rendahnya pemahaman mengenai etika digital, empati, serta tanggung jawab dalam berinteraksi di ruang siber menjadi faktor yang mendorong terjadinya cyberbullying di lingkungan pendidikan. Oleh karena itu, kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan dalam menangkal cyberbullying melalui peningkatan pemahaman peserta didik mengenai kewargaan digital, etika bermedia, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Kegiatan ini menggunakan pendekatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat dengan metode edukasi partisipatif. Subjek kegiatan terdiri atas 30 siswa yang aktif menggunakan media digital dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui kuesioner pre-test dan post-test, lembar observasi, serta dokumentasi kegiatan. Instrumen penelitian digunakan untuk mengukur tingkat pengetahuan, kesadaran, dan sikap peserta terkait pencegahan cyberbullying serta perilaku digital yang bertanggung jawab. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif berupa persentase dan perbandingan nilai rata-rata, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis melalui interpretasi tematik terhadap hasil observasi dan diskusi peserta. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pemahaman peserta mengenai pencegahan cyberbullying setelah mengikuti program edukasi. Tingkat pemahaman peserta meningkat dari 62,4% sebelum kegiatan menjadi 87,8% setelah kegiatan, atau mengalami peningkatan

sebesar 25,4 poin persentase. Selain itu, peserta menunjukkan peningkatan kesadaran terhadap etika digital, empati terhadap korban, serta penggunaan media sosial yang lebih bertanggung jawab. Dengan demikian, Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan berperan penting dalam memperkuat kewargaan digital dan mencegah cyberbullying di kalangan pelajar. Implikasi kegiatan ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi pendidikan anti-cyberbullying ke dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan dapat menjadi strategi yang efektif dan berkelanjutan dalam menciptakan lingkungan digital yang aman, etis, dan inklusif.

Abstract

Cyberbullying has become a growing concern among students due to the increasing use of social media and digital communication platforms. Limited awareness of digital ethics, empathy, and responsible online behavior often contributes to the occurrence of cyberbullying in educational environments. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the role of Citizenship Education in preventing cyberbullying by enhancing students' understanding of digital citizenship, ethical online behavior, and social responsibility. This study employed a community service-based educational intervention using a participatory approach. The participants consisted of 30 students who actively used digital media in their daily activities. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test questionnaires, observation sheets, and documentation. The instruments measured participants' knowledge, awareness, and attitudes regarding cyberbullying prevention and responsible digital behavior. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and mean score comparisons, while qualitative data obtained from observations and discussions were analyzed

through thematic interpretation. The findings revealed a substantial improvement in participants' understanding of cyberbullying prevention following the educational intervention. The average level of understanding increased from 62.4% before the activity to 87.8% after the activity, representing an improvement of 25.4 percentage points. Participants also demonstrated enhanced awareness of digital ethics, empathy toward victims, and responsible social media use. In conclusion, Citizenship Education plays a crucial role in strengthening digital citizenship and preventing cyberbullying among students. The study implies that integrating cyberbullying prevention programs into Citizenship Education can serve as an effective and sustainable strategy for fostering safe, ethical, and inclusive digital learning environments.



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INTRODUCTION

Citizenship Education (Civics Education) is an essential subject that plays a significant role in shaping intelligent, responsible citizens who possess character consistent with the values of Pancasila and democratic principles. In the digital era, characterized by the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies, the role of Citizenship Education extends beyond character formation in real-life contexts to include the development of digital ethics and responsibility in online environments. One of the major challenges emerging alongside increased internet use is cyberbullying, which refers to acts of intimidation, humiliation, harassment, or threats conducted through digital media. Cyberbullying has become an increasingly complex issue because it can occur at any time and reach victims without spatial or temporal limitations. Therefore, Citizenship Education occupies a strategic position in instilling moral values, digital ethics, tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility necessary to prevent and counter cyberbullying behaviors among younger generations (Casma et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of cyberbullying has attracted global attention due to its increasing prevalence, particularly among adolescents and students who constitute the largest group of internet users. Research conducted by Waghid, (2023) revealed that approximately 36.5% of adolescents in the United States had experienced cyberbullying, while more than 16% admitted to engaging in such behavior toward others. Similar findings were reported by Craig et al., (2020) through a meta-analysis indicating that cyberbullying prevalence across various countries ranges from 15% to 35%, depending on respondents' characteristics and social contexts. In Indonesia, data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) have shown an increase in reports of digital bullying involving students, corresponding with the growing use of social media and digital devices among children and adolescents. These conditions indicate that cyberbullying has evolved into a significant social issue requiring serious attention from multiple stakeholders, including educational institutions through the strengthening of character and citizenship education.

The impact of cyberbullying extends beyond psychological consequences and significantly affects victims' social and academic lives. Hu et al., (2021) found that adolescents who experience cyberbullying are nearly twice as likely to suffer from depression and anxiety

compared to those who have never been victims of online harassment. Lozano-Blasco et al., (2020) reported that approximately 20%–40% of cyberbullying victims experienced decreased learning motivation, concentration difficulties, and reduced participation in school activities. In Indonesia, Casmana et al., (2023) found that more than 30% of students who had experienced cyberbullying reported lower self-confidence and difficulties in establishing social relationships with peers. These findings suggest that cyberbullying is not merely a form of deviant online behavior but also a factor that can hinder the psychological and educational development of young people over time.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that improving digital literacy and character education constitutes an effective strategy for preventing cyberbullying behavior. Ayhan et al., (2025) found that students with higher levels of digital literacy were approximately 25% less likely to become involved in cyberbullying compared to those with lower digital literacy levels. Martin et al., (2020) also revealed that a high degree of empathy significantly contributes to reducing individuals' tendencies to engage in digital bullying. In Indonesia, El-Ashry et al., (2026) reported that the implementation of digital ethics education programs in schools reduced cyberbullying behavior by 18% following educational interventions. These findings indicate that character formation and ethical awareness in digital media use are critical factors in creating a healthy and safe digital environment for students.

In this context, Citizenship Education makes a highly relevant contribution because it fundamentally encompasses moral values, democracy, responsibility, and respect for the rights of others. Chang et al., (2015) emphasized that Citizenship Education functions as a vehicle for character education aimed at developing ethical, critical, and responsible citizens. Research conducted by Lozano-Blasco et al., (2020) and appreciation of diversity by up to 22%. Furthermore, Pastor et al., (2024) found that digital citizenship education positively influences prosocial behavior in online environments and reduces aggressive tendencies in social media usage. These findings strengthen the argument that Citizenship Education not only functions within the context of direct social interaction but also plays a vital role in developing digital citizenship ethics that are increasingly necessary in the information technology era.

The effectiveness of educational programs in addressing cyberbullying has also been confirmed through various international and national studies. Vlaanderen et al., (2020), through a meta-analysis of school-based intervention programs, found that bullying and cyberbullying prevention initiatives were capable of reducing bullying incidents by 10%–20%. Similarly, Cox et al., (2018) demonstrated that training in social skills, positive communication, and digital ethics reduced students' involvement in cyberbullying by up to 17%. In Indonesia, Younas & Imran, (2025) reported that Citizenship Education-based counseling integrated with digital literacy significantly improved students' understanding of cyberbullying risks, reaching a level of 85%. These findings suggest that educational approaches emphasizing citizenship values and digital literacy can serve as effective preventive strategies for fostering responsible digital behavior.

On the other hand, the rapid growth of digital technology in Indonesia has increased the urgency of strengthening Citizenship Education within digital spaces. Data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) indicate that internet penetration has exceeded 79% of the national population, with students and university learners representing the dominant user groups. Zheng et al., (2025) found that approximately 28% of Indonesian adolescents had been involved in cyberbullying either as perpetrators or victims. This finding is supported by Erlande et al., (2025), who argued that limited understanding of digital ethics and

inadequate supervision of social media use are among the primary factors increasing adolescents' vulnerability to cyberbullying. These conditions highlight the need for educational institutions to place greater emphasis on strengthening digital character development through systematic and sustainable learning processes.

Based on the aforementioned studies, cyberbullying can be understood as a multidimensional problem influenced by various factors, including low digital literacy, limited empathy, weak self-control, and inadequate understanding of digital ethics. Although numerous studies have examined the prevalence, impacts, and prevention strategies of cyberbullying, research that specifically positions Citizenship Education as a primary instrument for combating cyberbullying remains relatively limited, particularly within the context of community service activities in Indonesian educational settings. Consequently, a research gap exists regarding the integration of citizenship values, character education, and digital literacy as a preventive approach to cyberbullying. The novelty of this article lies in optimizing the role of Citizenship Education in promoting digital ethical awareness, social responsibility, and positive online behavior as a strategy for preventing cyberbullying. Therefore, this community service activity aims to enhance students' understanding and awareness of cyberbullying risks while strengthening citizenship values that can serve as a foundation for creating a safe, ethical, and responsible digital environment.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This community service activity employed a participatory educational approach aimed at enhancing students' understanding of cyberbullying prevention through Citizenship Education. The program was conducted using a community-based learning model that emphasizes active participant involvement in the learning process. Citizenship Education was utilized as the primary framework to promote digital citizenship, ethical online behavior, social responsibility, and respect for others in digital environments. Previous studies have highlighted that educational interventions integrating digital citizenship and character education can effectively reduce the likelihood of cyberbullying behaviors among adolescents (Younas & Imran, 2025). The target participants of this activity were students who actively use social media and digital communication platforms in their daily lives.

The implementation process consisted of three main stages: preparation, execution, and evaluation. During the preparation stage, the service team conducted a preliminary needs assessment through informal observations and discussions with school stakeholders to identify participants' understanding of cyberbullying issues. Educational materials were subsequently developed, focusing on the concepts, causes, impacts, and prevention strategies of cyberbullying, as well as the role of responsible digital citizenship. In the execution stage, participants attended interactive educational sessions involving presentations, group discussions, case studies, and question-and-answer activities. These learning strategies were selected to encourage active engagement and critical reflection regarding ethical behavior in digital spaces (Zheng et al., 2025).

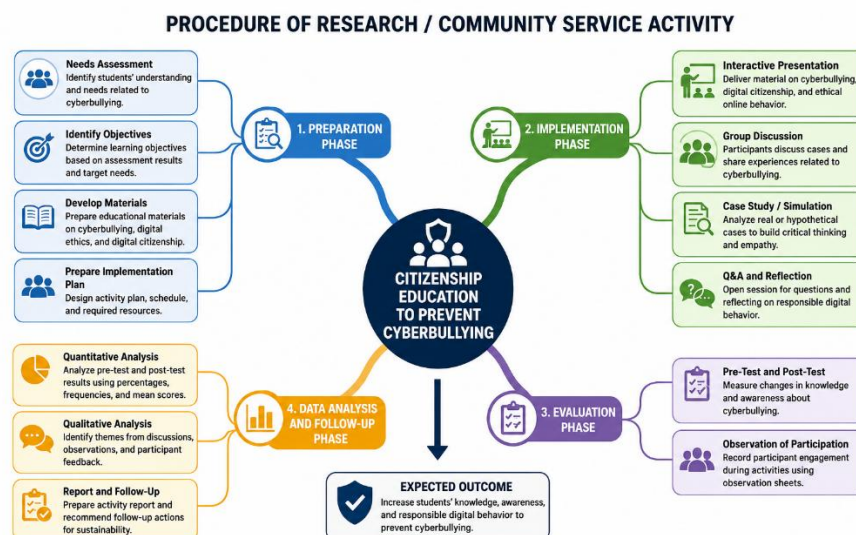


Figure 1. Implementation method

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, participants were asked to complete pre-activity and post-activity assessments designed to measure changes in their knowledge and awareness regarding cyberbullying prevention. The assessment instruments consisted of structured questionnaires containing items related to cyberbullying identification, digital ethics, online communication behavior, and responsible social media use. In addition, participant engagement during discussions and educational activities was documented through observation sheets completed by the facilitators. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for a more comprehensive evaluation of participants' learning outcomes and behavioral responses throughout the program.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively by comparing participants' responses before and after the intervention. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were presented using percentages, frequencies, and average score improvements to illustrate changes in participants' understanding of cyberbullying prevention. Meanwhile, qualitative findings derived from observations, discussions, and participant feedback were analyzed through thematic interpretation to identify emerging patterns related to digital citizenship awareness and anti-cyberbullying attitudes. The results of this analysis were subsequently used to assess the contribution of Citizenship Education in fostering responsible digital behavior and strengthening students' capacity to prevent cyberbullying within their educational environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service activity entitled "The Role of Citizenship Education in Preventing Cyberbullying" was conducted through educational sessions aimed at increasing students' awareness and understanding of responsible digital behavior. The activity was attended by students who actively use social media and digital communication platforms in their daily lives. Throughout the implementation process, participants demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm, particularly during discussions regarding the forms, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying. This indicates that cyberbullying is a relevant issue that directly affects the daily experiences of young people in the digital era.

The results of the pre-activity assessment revealed that many participants had limited knowledge regarding the concept of cyberbullying and its potential consequences. Several participants perceived cyberbullying merely as a form of online joking or entertainment without recognizing its psychological and social impacts. Furthermore, some participants were unable to distinguish between acceptable online interactions and behaviors that constitute digital harassment. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that adolescents often underestimate the seriousness of cyberbullying due to insufficient digital literacy and ethical awareness (Erlande et al., 2025)

During the educational sessions, participants were introduced to various forms of cyberbullying, including online harassment, spreading rumors, exclusion from online groups, impersonation, and the dissemination of offensive content. The use of case studies and real-life examples enabled participants to better understand how cyberbullying occurs and how it affects victims. Group discussions encouraged students to express their opinions and share personal experiences related to online interactions. This interactive learning process facilitated deeper reflection on the importance of maintaining respectful communication in digital environments.

The implementation of Citizenship Education values within the activity significantly contributed to participants' understanding of ethical digital behavior. Through discussions on responsibility, respect for human dignity, empathy, tolerance, and democratic values, participants were encouraged to recognize that online actions have real consequences for others. The integration of citizenship values into digital contexts helped students understand that responsible citizenship extends beyond physical communities and includes behavior in virtual spaces. This finding supports the concept of digital citizenship, which emphasizes ethical participation and responsible engagement in online communities (Lauricella et al., 2020).

The post-activity evaluation demonstrated a noticeable improvement in participants' knowledge and awareness regarding cyberbullying prevention. Most participants were able to correctly identify various forms of cyberbullying and explain appropriate strategies for responding to such incidents. In addition, participants exhibited greater awareness of the importance of reporting cyberbullying cases, supporting victims, and avoiding behaviors that may contribute to online harassment. These improvements indicate that educational interventions can effectively strengthen students' capacity to navigate digital environments responsibly.

Another important finding was the increased level of empathy demonstrated by participants after the educational program. During the reflection sessions, many students expressed a better understanding of the emotional and psychological effects experienced by victims of cyberbullying. They acknowledged that seemingly harmless comments or online jokes could cause significant harm to others. This development suggests that Citizenship Education can play an important role in fostering empathy and social responsibility, which are essential components in preventing aggressive online behavior (Martin et al., 2019)

Participant engagement throughout the activity further highlighted the effectiveness of interactive educational approaches. Students actively participated in discussions, asked questions, and provided responses to case scenarios presented by the facilitators. Such active involvement contributed to a more meaningful learning experience and allowed participants to internalize the values being promoted. Previous research has shown that participatory learning

strategies enhance students' understanding and encourage positive behavioral changes because learners become directly involved in the educational process (Moller et al., 2025).

From a broader perspective, the findings demonstrate that Citizenship Education serves as an effective preventive mechanism against cyberbullying by integrating character education, digital literacy, and civic responsibility. The activity not only increased participants' cognitive understanding but also promoted positive attitudes toward ethical online conduct. This outcome is particularly important considering the increasing prevalence of internet use among adolescents and the growing risks associated with online communication. Consequently, schools and educational institutions should strengthen the integration of digital citizenship concepts within Citizenship Education curricula to address emerging challenges in the digital age.

Overall, the results suggest that educational interventions grounded in Citizenship Education principles can significantly contribute to cyberbullying prevention efforts. The combination of knowledge enhancement, ethical awareness, empathy development, and responsible digital behavior provides a comprehensive approach to addressing cyberbullying among students. Therefore, continuous educational programs focusing on digital citizenship and cyber ethics should be promoted as part of broader efforts to create safe, respectful, and inclusive digital environments for young people. These findings reinforce the strategic role of Citizenship Education in preparing students to become responsible digital citizens capable of contributing positively to contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

Citizenship Education plays a significant role in preventing cyberbullying by fostering students' awareness of ethical digital behavior, social responsibility, empathy, and respect for others in online environments. The implementation of educational activities demonstrated that integrating citizenship values with digital literacy can enhance participants' understanding of cyberbullying and encourage the development of positive attitudes toward responsible online communication. Through interactive learning experiences, students became more capable of recognizing inappropriate digital behaviors and understanding the importance of maintaining a safe and respectful digital environment.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that Citizenship Education serves as an effective framework for strengthening digital citizenship among young people. By promoting character development and ethical engagement in cyberspace, Citizenship Education contributes to the cultivation of responsible digital citizens who are able to navigate technological advancements while upholding civic values. Therefore, the integration of cyberbullying prevention initiatives within Citizenship Education programs can be considered a sustainable approach to supporting the creation of inclusive, ethical, and secure digital communities in educational settings.

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