

A Systematic Literature Review on Enhancing Democratic Participation Through Civic Skills

Tiara Ernita^{1*}, Suyato²

^{1,2} Program Studi Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*tiaraernita.2025@student.uny.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Research on civic skills has gained growing attention in recent decades, yet comprehensive syntheses of its development remain limited. Civic skills are fundamental to promoting democratic participation, social responsibility, and global citizenship. This study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) combined with bibliometric analysis to examine the evolution, trends, and thematic focus of civic skills research. Using the term "civic skills" in article titles, abstracts, and keywords within the Scopus database, 287 publications from 2004 to 2025 were analyzed. Data were processed using VOSviewer to identify major clusters, authorship networks, and citation patterns. The analysis reveals a significant increase in civic skills research after 2010, aligning with the rise of digital citizenship and global education. Four key clusters emerged: (1) civic engagement and participation, (2) critical thinking and communication, (3) digital and media literacy, and (4) civic education and curriculum development. Notably, the digital and media literacy cluster fundamentally redefines democratic participation in the 21st century transforming it from conventional civic involvement into digitally mediated, participatory, and network-based engagement. The study concludes that integrating digital literacy into civic education is vital for preparing active, critical, and responsible citizens. Future research should include multilingual databases to broaden analytical scope and generalizability.

Keywords: Civic skills; Digital literacy; Civic education; Democratic participation; Bibliometric analysis

ABSTRAK

Penelitian mengenai keterampilan kewarganegaraan (*civic skills*) telah mendapat perhatian yang semakin besar dalam beberapa dekade terakhir, namun kajian yang secara komprehensif mensintesis perkembangan bidang ini masih terbatas. Keterampilan kewarganegaraan berperan penting dalam mendorong partisipasi demokratis, tanggung jawab sosial, dan kewargaan global. Penelitian ini melakukan *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) yang dikombinasikan dengan analisis bibliometrik untuk menelaah evolusi, tren, dan fokus tematik penelitian tentang keterampilan kewarganegaraan. Dengan menggunakan istilah "civic skills" pada judul, abstrak, dan kata kunci artikel dalam basis data Scopus, sebanyak 287 publikasi dari tahun 2004 hingga 2025 dianalisis. Data diolah menggunakan perangkat lunak VOSviewer untuk mengidentifikasi kluster utama, jaringan kepenulisan, dan pola sitasi. Hasil analisis menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam penelitian keterampilan kewarganegaraan setelah tahun 2010, seiring dengan berkembangnya konsep kewargaan digital dan pendidikan global. Empat kluster utama ditemukan: (1) keterlibatan dan partisipasi warga negara, (2) berpikir kritis dan komunikasi, (3) literasi digital dan media, serta (4) pendidikan kewarganegaraan dan pengembangan kurikulum. Di antara kluster tersebut, literasi digital dan media muncul sebagai yang paling transformatif karena mendefinisikan ulang partisipasi demokratis di abad ke-21 dari keterlibatan konvensional menuju partisipasi yang dimediasi secara digital, partisipatif, dan berbasis jejaring. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi literasi digital dalam pendidikan kewarganegaraan sangat penting untuk membentuk warga negara yang aktif, kritis, dan bertanggung jawab. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk melibatkan basis data multibahasa guna memperluas cakupan dan generalisasi analisis.

Kata kunci: Keterampilan kewarganegaraan; Literasi digital; Pendidikan kewarganegaraan; Partisipasi demokratis; Analisis bibliometrik

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INTRODUCTION

The ability of citizens to contribute to their communities and engage in public life is predicated on their possession of civic skills. These competencies, which integrate critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, are vital for promoting participation and safeguarding democratic values. Deficiencies in these areas can obstruct a citizen's capacity to manage intricate political landscapes. This is resulting in diminished democratic engagement and weakened social cohesion.

The importance of civic skills lies in their dual role in both political participation and civic education. They are not innate abilities but rather skill-based capacities that must be intentionally developed and practiced to be effective (Kirlin, 2005). Civic skills provide individuals with the necessary tools to critically analyze political information, communicate across diverse groups, and influence governance processes (Maiello et al., 2003). For instance, pedagogical methods such as debate, advocacy, and argumentation have proven particularly effective in cultivating these skills, as they foster student engagement with diverse perspectives while strengthening competencies in research, writing, and collaboration (Palczewski, 2019; Zorwick & Wade, 2016).

The development of civic skills has been closely linked to experiential and interactive learning approaches. Service-learning projects are one prominent example, as they allow students to engage with their communities while applying theoretical knowledge to real-world issues ((Bringle & Clayton, 2021; Strait et al., 2023). These projects not only foster student reflection on social responsibility but also encourage the evaluation of civic outcomes, bridging academic and community goals. Similarly, simulations and collaborative learning models have shown strong potential to enhance civic competence, particularly in preparing students to process political information and work collectively in democratic decision-making (Bernstein, 2008; Hidayah et al., 2024).

Despite this significance of civic skills, numerous challenges hinder their integration into mainstream civic education. A lack of prioritization at policy levels, insufficient social studies resources, and persistent inequalities between socio-economic groups create disparities in civic skill development (Jamieson, 2013). Furthermore, the polarized political climate and cultural differences across societies complicate efforts to design and implement inclusive civic education frameworks (Khoury, 2023). These barriers underscore the need for innovative pedagogical strategies and sustained policy support to ensure that civic education remains effective and equitable.

In response to these challenges, scholars and educators have increasingly turned to technology driven and participatory methods as promising opportunities to advance civic skills. For example, eService learning leverages digital platforms to expand experiential learning and civic engagement to broader and more diverse audiences (Strait et al., 2023). Similarly, participatory civic games and digital media applications have demonstrated potential in fostering playful yet meaningful civic

learning experiences, particularly in urban planning and social participation contexts (Rapanà et al., 2021). Such innovations open new avenues for engaging younger generations and adapting civic education to contemporary societal dynamics.

In conclusion, civic skills are a vital foundation for democratic participation and civic responsibility in the 21st century. Educational institutions are key actors in cultivating these skills through traditional pedagogical approaches, community engagement, and technology enhanced innovations. Addressing existing challenges such as unequal access to resources and political polarization while leveraging new opportunities will not only strengthen civic education but also prepare individuals to actively contribute to democratic societies and sustainable communities in a global context (Jamieson, 2013; Kirlin, 2005; Rapanà et al., 2021; Strait et al., 2023).

Table 1: Defining Element of Civic Skills

No	Defining factor of Civic Skills	Reference
1	The talents that allow people to engage in society in an effective and responsible manner are referred to as civic skills. This entails participating in democratic processes, being aware of one's rights and obligations as a citizen, and making wise judgments.	(Guerrero Elecalde et al., 2024)
2	Civic skills are the attributes and information that enable people to engage in civic activities, including protests, in an effective manner. Because they allow people to engage in both political and non-political activities, which influences their intentions for activism and radicalism, these skills are crucial for turning intentions into actions.	(Khiatani et al., 2023)
3	Civic abilities are the knowledge, attitudes, and social skills necessary for the proper exercise of democratic citizenship. They include aspects of empathy, mutual understanding, and coexistence. Acquiring these skills is essential for managing emotions and communicating with people online.	(Peart et al., 2020)
4	The talents that allow people to participate in communal affairs and the democratic process are referred to as civic skills. Participation in	(Liphart et al., 2022)

	programs like Superior Days helps improve these abilities, which incorporate public speaking, comprehending diverse viewpoints, accomplishing group objectives, and setting up meetings.	
5	The qualities that allow people to engage in civic life successfully are known as civic skills. These include the capacity to accept judgments made by the majority, act responsibly toward others, resolve conflicts, and be inquisitive about the strengths of others. More positive civic skills in the classroom are reflected in higher ratings in these areas.	(van Loon & Kaufman, 2023)
6	Civic skills, which include social and citizenship competencies, are the talents that allow people to fulfill their civic responsibilities and interact with their community. In order to educate students for active involvement in society, these abilities are crucial for promoting ethics and solidarity within the educational setting, especially at the university level.	(Morales-Rodríguez, 2013)
7	Civic skills are the abilities people gain from taking part in deliberative processes; these skills allow them to conduct meetings, express viewpoints, and lead conversations. Through practice and contact in participatory settings, these abilities are developed, which helps people better comprehend civic engagement and the role of citizens in democracies.	(Talpin, 2012)
8	Civic skills are a collection of abilities that students need in the twenty-first century, such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and a thorough awareness of international affairs. In a complex and worldwide society, these abilities allow people to	(Hidayah et al., 2024)

	contribute as skilled, engaged, and active citizens.	
9	Civic skills are those that enable people to protect their interests by helping them comprehend and relate to the political world. These abilities, which are necessary for civic engagement and democratic involvement, are developed in large part through education.	(Yang & Hoskins, 2020)
10	The research paper conceptualizes civic skills as a broad, critical civic skill that encompasses sociotechnical issues, highlighting the relationship between students' perceptions of the future, their agency, and aspects such as hopes, fears, and active citizenship. It emphasizes the potential of future-oriented science education to help students develop these civic skills.	("Futurising Science Education: Technology, Agency and Scientific Literacy," 2024)

Studies on civic skills reveal a wide diversity of definitions. Some scholars emphasize the normative and democratic dimension (Guerrero Elecalde et al., 2024; Morales-Rodríguez, 2013), while others highlight practical participation through collective action or deliberative processes (Khiatani et al., 2023; Liphart et al., 2022; Talpin, 2012). Several definitions focus on social-emotional and educational aspects, such as empathy, conflict resolution, solidarity, and ethics (Peart et al., 2020; van Loon & Kaufman, 2023). More contemporary perspectives expand the concept to include 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and global awareness (Hidayah et al., 2024; Yang & Hoskins, 2020; "Futurising Science Education: Technology, Agency and Scientific Literacy," 2024).

Although civic skills have gained increasing attention in contemporary citizenship education, several important research gaps remain. Up until now, few studies have thoroughly examined how digital literacy contributes to the formation and transformation of civic skills within the context of technology driven democratic participation. Moreover, there is still a lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework that integrates the cognitive, social, emotional, and participatory dimensions of civic competence. Previous research also tends to separate local civic issues from the global and digital challenges that now shape how citizens engage and participate in society. In addition, comprehensive bibliometric analyses exploring how these themes intersect within the scholarly landscape are still very limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by systematically mapping the development, thematic structure,

and emerging trends in civic skills research, particularly in relation to digital literacy and democratic participation.

METHOD AND ANALYSIS

This study investigates the topic of civic skills through a combination of bibliometric analysis and a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). A systematic review provides an organized and transparent procedure for identifying, selecting, and critically evaluating relevant publications, ensuring methodological rigor and replicability (Mortari et al., 2021; Vargas-Murillo et al., 2025). Bibliometric analysis complements this by quantitatively examining the literature to uncover publication trends, citation patterns, influential contributors, and thematic clusters within the field (Abu Azam & Rabei, 2025; Khaw et al., 2024).

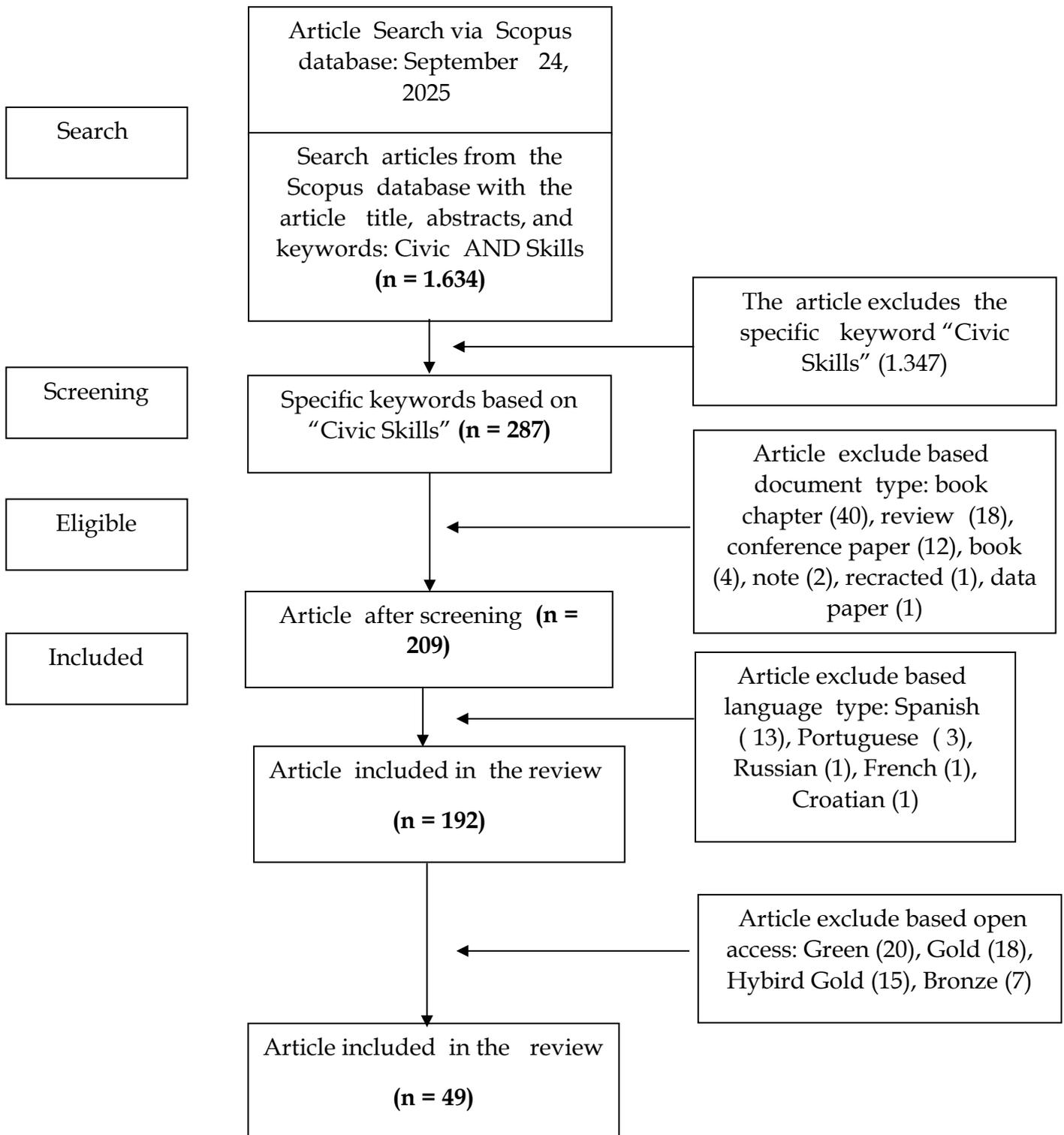
The review process follows the PRISMA framework, which establishes a replicable standard for screening and selecting studies. The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles published up to September 2025, (2) publications written in English, and (3) studies explicitly addressing civic skills in the context of civic education, democratic participation, or related domains.

Bibliometric mapping was performed using VOSviewer, a specialized software tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks such as co-authorship, citation links, and keyword co-occurrence (Li & Wei, 2022; Pais et al., 2023). VOSviewer was particularly crucial in this study to map the structural relationships and thematic overlaps among key concepts such as critical thinking and digital literacy, which are frequently treated as separate constructs in existing literature. This mapping allowed for a deeper understanding of how these interconnected competencies collectively shape the broader discourse on civic skills.

The integration of SLR and bibliometric visualization provides a robust methodological foundation to capture the field's intellectual structure, trace its historical development, and identify emerging research trajectories. This combined approach has proven effective in delivering comprehensive insights and guiding future studies (Araya-Pizarro & Verelst, 2023; de Oliveira et al., 2023; Jing et al., 2024; Mukhtar et al., 2025).

The literature search was conducted using the Scopus database to identify peer-reviewed articles related to civic skills. The search was performed in September 2025 using the following search string: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("civic skills") AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2026). This search returned 287 documents, which were then screened according to inclusion and exclusion criteria under the PRISMA framework.

Figure 1. Systematic Literature Review information flow using PRISMA



The bibliometric mapping in this study employed VOSviewer to visualize and analyze the structural and thematic relationships within the field of civic skills research. The software is based on several quantitative indicators that determine how items such as keywords, authors, or publications are connected and clustered. The first indicator, co-occurrence analysis, measures how frequently two terms appear together within the same documents, indicating a conceptual association between them. A higher frequency of co-occurrence suggests stronger thematic relevance and helps identify recurring or emerging research topics. The second indicator, link strength, represents the intensity of connection between two items, while total link strength (TLS) reflects the cumulative strength of all links associated with a single item, highlighting its overall influence within the network. Items with high TLS values such as “civic education” or “democratic participation” often act as intellectual hubs that bridge multiple thematic domains.

Additionally, density visualization illustrates the concentration of relationships among items. Areas with higher density (typically shown in yellow or red) signify well established research topics, while areas with lower density (in green or blue) represent less explored or emerging themes. The clustering of items in VOSviewer is determined using algorithms such as LinLog/modularity optimization, which groups items based on the strength and frequency of their interconnections. Each cluster is visualized with a distinct color, and the spatial distance between clusters reflects their conceptual proximity.

Through these indicators co-occurrence, link strength, total link strength, and density visualization the analysis provides a scientific basis for interpreting the bibliometric map. This ensures that the resulting visualization is not merely descriptive but analytically grounded, revealing the intellectual structure, thematic patterns, and developmental trends of civic skills research.

There are 1,634 documents that address this topic overall, based on search results retrieved on September 24, 2025, from the Scopus database using the article title, abstract, and keywords: "Civic AND Skills" across a range of academic fields, from the first publication in 2004 to the most recent in 2025 (see Figure 1). Documents are classified by a screening process based on these findings. A total of 541 documents were obtained by removing articles according to the kind of document: Four books, two notes, one retracted, one data article, forty book chapters, eighteen reviews, and twelve conference papers. 315 items were found after the screening results were categorized by document kinds. RQ1: Does the investigation of Civic Skills remain a pertinent topic for future academic research? RQ2: What is the current distribution of research studies concerning Civic Skills? RQ3: What are the theoretical and practical ramifications for future research?

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The conclusions of this study focus on evidence about civic skills from 49 papers in the Scopus database. The quantification of journal sources, annual publications, and published articles is the source of this data. This includes the writers, the countries they are affiliated with, and their affiliations.

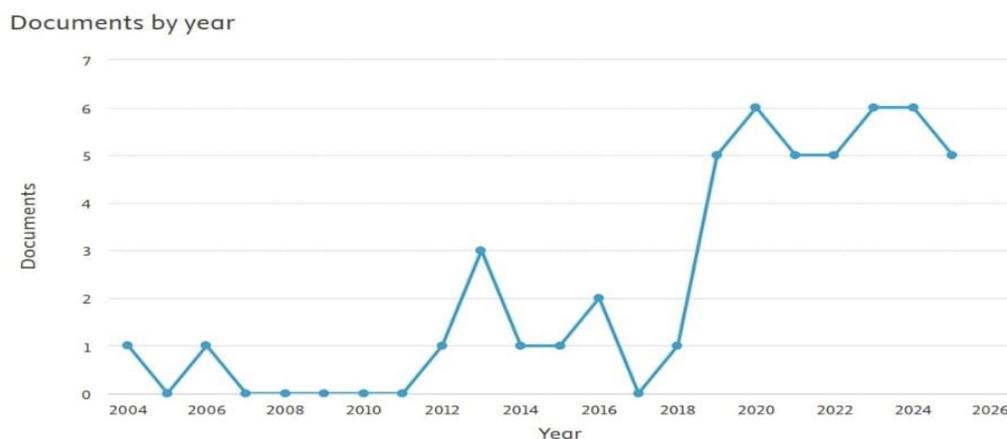
Publication Trend

RQ1: Does the investigation of Civic Skills remain a pertinent topic for future academic research?

In order to analyze the distribution of civic skills research in the chosen papers, the studies were categorized by country or region, with the restriction that only the top 10 countries be shown. Scholars and practitioners will benefit from having a keen eye on how to distribute scholarship related to civic skills in order to influence the future research agenda, especially with regard to enhancing civic education and democratic engagement.

First, the United States leads the world in the distribution of academic research related to civic skills by country (15 articles), followed by Spain (9 articles) and the United Kingdom (6 articles). Austria and Germany also contributed three pieces apiece, while Brazil, Finland, the Netherlands, Poland, and Based on the information obtained from the Scopus database, it has been determined that throughout the course of thirty years, there have been forty-nine papers about civic skills; this indicates that research on civic skills is still rather rare, as Figure 1 shows. Beginning in 2020, the investigation of civic skills began to take shape during the past ten years. The inaugural study was executed by (Belfield, C. R., 2004) and was titled "Democratic education across school types: Evidence for the U.S. from NHES99," and it marked the introduction of the phrase that is now known as "Digital Citizenship." Although the present core curriculum places a strong emphasis on teaching students civic skills that promote deliberative, participative, and liberal democracy, it does not specifically seek to develop their democratic citizenship (Lofstrm J., 2025).

Figure 2. Number of Civic Skills



Soure: Scopus Database

Since 2004, scholarly publications on civic skills have remained limited, particularly in reputable journals. This scarcity indicates a research gap that future scholars can address to enrich the field. The urgency of studying civic skills has become increasingly evident over time, as these competencies are essential for preparing students to grow into strong, responsible citizens who actively contribute to solving national problems. Emphasizing the development of civic skills not only strengthens civic knowledge but also fosters positive attitudes in responding to the dynamics of national life, thereby highlighting their crucial role in shaping democratic participation.

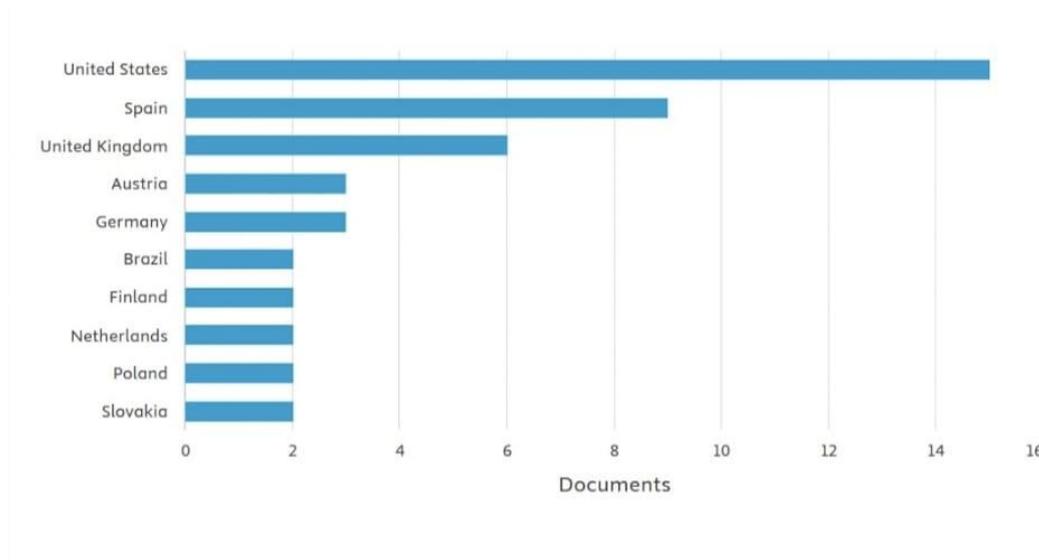
Affiliation Country Trend

RQ2: What is the current distribution of research studies concerning Civic Skills?

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Figure 3: Number of articles by country or territory (top 10 country)

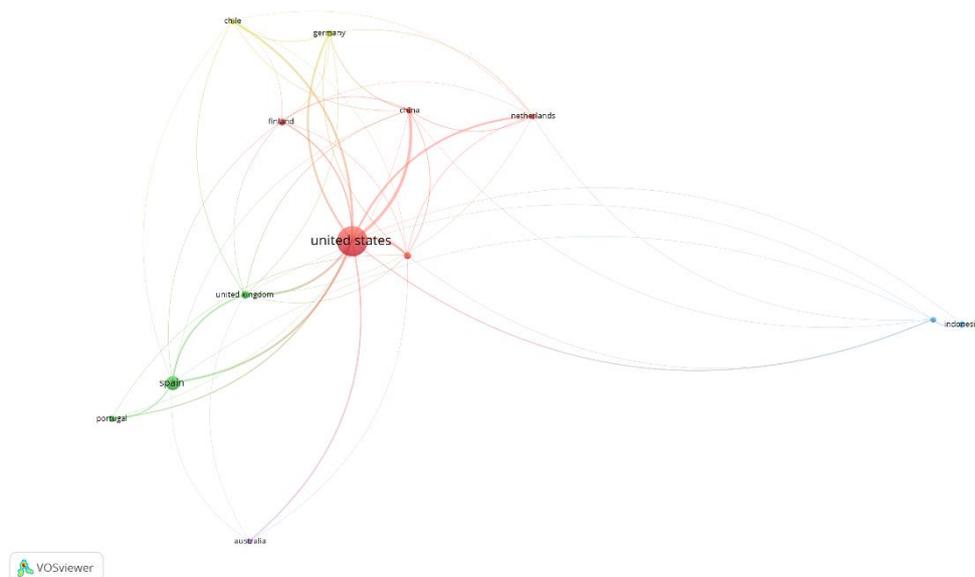


Soure: Scopus Database

The distribution of research questions related to civic skills by country or region indicates the dominance of the United States, which becomes the focal point of scholarly cooperation in this area. Strong research ties exist between the US and several nations, including the UK, Spain, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, and Austria. While Australia and Indonesia appear to be developing contributors with comparatively fewer but different linkages, Spain also exhibits noteworthy collaboration ties with Portugal and Chile.

According to these results, the topic of civic skills has received a lot of scholarly attention, mostly from Western nations, but it is also progressively spreading to Asia Pacific countries like Australia and Indonesia, demonstrating its increasing significance on a worldwide scale. Using VOSviewer software, researchers also examined the connections among the nations participating in civic skills study. When creating a methodical, forward-looking research agenda, this stage is essential. The VOSviewer results of the analysis show how countries are interacting while examining the civic skills topic, with the US serving as the primary hub of cooperation (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Network country visualization

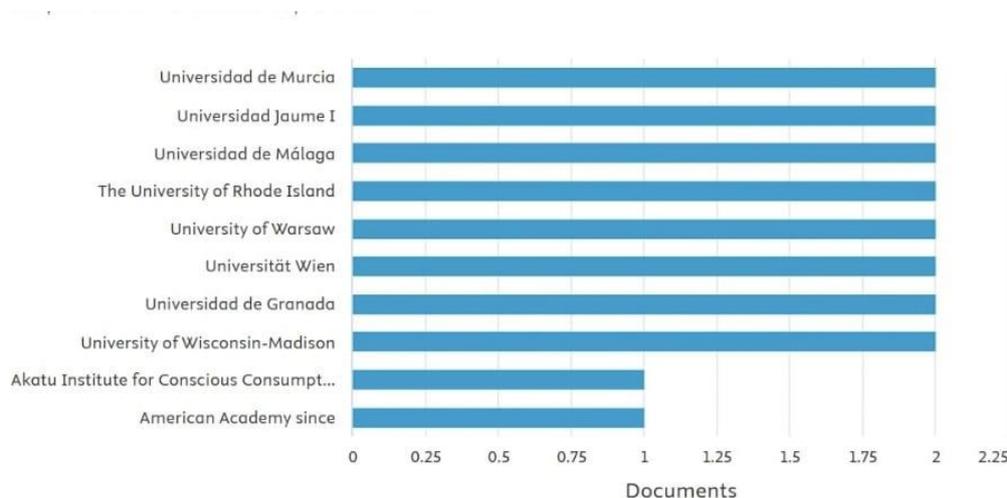


Source: Output VOSviewer Software

These findings further reinforce the idea that the study of civic skills is not solely a matter of interest within Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany, which dominate the discourse and exhibit strong interconnected research networks. Instead, it also gain attention in non-Western nations such as Indonesia, Brazil, and Chile, demonstrating that the development of civic skills is of global relevance. The visualization indicates that the United States acts as the central hub, fostering collaborations with multiple countries across Europe, Latin America, and Asia Pacific.

Second, the distribution of civic skills scholarship based on institutional affiliations is primarily seen in a few universities, such as Universidad de Murcia (Spain), Universidad Jaume I (Spain), Universidad de Málaga (Spain), The University of Rhode Island (United States), University of Warsaw (Poland), Universität Wien (Austria), and Universidad de Granada (Spain), each of which has contributed two articles. The American Academy (United States), the Akatu Institute for Conscious Consumption (Brazil), and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (United States) are other noteworthy contributors with one publication (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number of articles by institution (top 10 institutions).

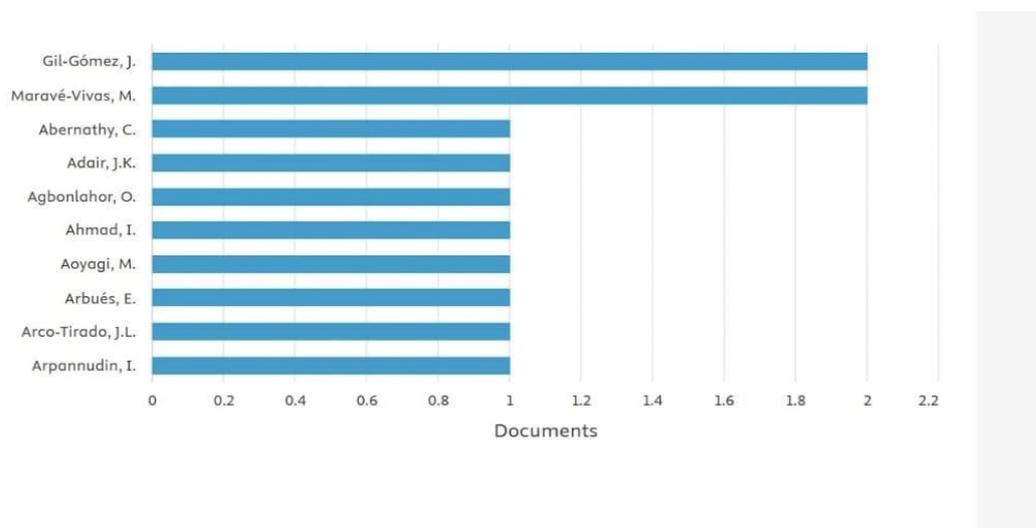


Soure: Scopus Database

The dissemination of civic skills scholarship in the premier 10 publications predicated on affiliations elucidates that it is not solely of scholarly interest in academic institutions situated in Spain such as Universidad de Murcia, Universidad Jaume I, Universidad de Málaga, and Universidad de Granada but also captivates scrutiny in educational establishments with a non Spanish and non Spanish speaking majority populace. These findings reflect the increasingly internationalized attention to civic skills research, where both European and American institutions have demonstrated active participation.

Third, the allocation of inquiries about civic skills based on author contributions is predominantly characterized by Gil-Gomez, J. with 2 articles and Marave-Vivas, M. with 2 articles. In addition, several other scholars have each contributed 1 article, including Abernathy, C., Adair, J.K., Agbonlahor, O., Ahmad, I., Aoyagi, M., Arbués, E., Arco-Tirado, J.L., and Arpanudin, I. (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Count of Publication by author (top 10 author)



Source: Scopus Database

Co Authorship

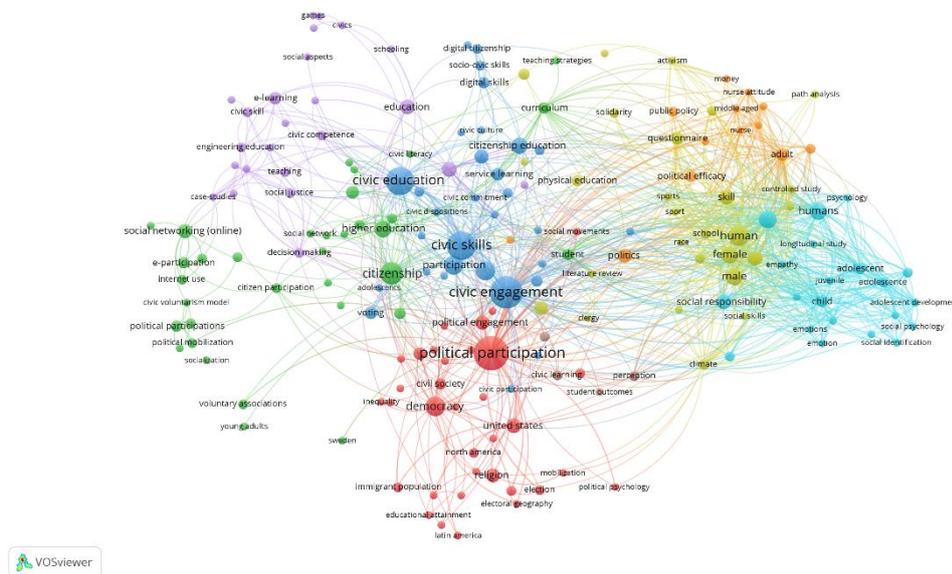
RQ3: What are the theoretical and practical implications from the perspective of future research?

The examination focused on manuscripts gathered from the Scopus collection. The results may have theoretical and practical significance for future civic skills research, as demonstrated by the usage of VOS viewer. The results of the metadata analysis using VOS viewer will help researchers and practitioners better comprehend the findings and assumptions related to civic skills. By emphasizing the facets of civic skills like critical thinking, teamwork, and democratic participation that have been extensively examined by previous researchers as well as those that have not, the results of the bibliometric analysis carried out with VOSviewer can be utilized to guide future study. From a practitioner's perspective, the results of the literature analysis done with VOSviewer will assist educators, policymakers, and civic organizations in implementing strategies that will develop civic skills in educational and community contexts in a sustainable way, enabling citizens to engage in democratic societies around the world in a suitable and effective way.

From Figure 6, the occurrences of the most prominent keywords reveal that civic education (120), civic engagement (110), civic skills (98), and political participation (94) are the dominant themes in the literature. Other frequently appearing keywords include citizenship (85), social responsibility (78), education (72), youth (65), digital skills (61), and political efficacy (59). Additional related terms such as curriculum (53), social networks (online) (47), volunteering (44), public policy (40), political socialization (37), democracy (35), student outcomes (30), socialization (28),

and adolescents (25) further emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of civic skills research, connecting education, politics, and social development. Finally, these 10 most frequent keywords and their interrelations are shown in Table 2.

Figure 6: Co occurrence framework and representation of key terms



Source: Output VOSviewer Software

Table 2: Keyword by Authors

No	Keyword	Total link strength
1	Political participation	171
2	Civic engagement	136
3	Skill	114
4	Civic skills	79
5	Social responsibility	57
6	Civic education	50
7	Politics	48
8	Citizenship	43
9	Democracy	40
10	Participation	27

Source: Output VOSviewer Software

Based on the mapping results and a review of previous studies, a research gap has been identified because most of the prior research was conducted in Western countries, such as the United States, Spain, and the United Kingdom (see Figure 3). Similarly, American and European universities provided the majority of institutional donations (see Figure 5). Therefore, further research should be done outside of North America and Europe, especially in developing countries where civic education is still underrepresented.

The bibliometric mapping conducted through VOSviewer revealed four dominant clusters that together define the intellectual landscape of civic skills research: (1) Civic Engagement and Participation, (2) Critical Thinking and Communication, (3) Digital Literacy and Media Competence, and (4) Civic Education and Curriculum Development. These clusters demonstrate that civic skills represent a multidimensional construct, integrating cognitive, social, emotional, and participatory competencies essential for democratic life (Hoskins & Crick, 2010).

Among these clusters, Digital Literacy (Cluster 3) emerges as a pivotal factor that redefines the traditional understanding of Civic Engagement (Cluster 1). It broadens citizens' civic practices from offline participation to digital forms of deliberation and activism, demanding new civic competencies such as evaluating information credibility, managing online interactions, and exercising ethical judgment in digital spaces (Kahne & Middaugh, 2012). Furthermore, Critical Thinking and Communication (Cluster 2) intersect closely with civic skills, as these abilities underpin informed decision-making, respectful dialogue, and evidence-based argumentation core components of active citizenship (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013).

However, the reviewed literature reveals that while civic skills are widely acknowledged as crucial for sustaining democracy, their conceptualization often remains fragmented and normatively narrow. Most studies emphasize participation and knowledge, yet pay limited attention to the affective and ethical dimensions of civic competence. Moreover, there is limited critical engagement with how civic skills operate within digital and algorithmic environments, where misinformation, filter bubbles, and echo chambers challenge citizens' capacity for critical reflection and inclusive dialogue (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2018).

Therefore, future research should adopt a more integrative and critical framework that situates civic skills within digital, cultural, and political ecosystems. This perspective would allow scholars and educators to understand civic skills not merely as individual attributes but as relational, contextual, and evolving capacities shaped by power dynamics, technological infrastructures, and global interdependence (Castells, 2015; Dahlgren & Hill, 2022).

The recent surge of research on civic skills and digital engagement cannot be separated from broader global and national political developments. The rise of social media as a political arena most notably after the Arab Spring (2011) has transformed how citizens express opinions, mobilize collective action, and hold authorities accountable. In Indonesia, similar dynamics emerged during events such as the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election (Pilkada DKI 2017), where online platforms became a battleground for political narratives, activism, and polarization. These phenomena illustrate how digital spaces have evolved into new public spheres that both empower and challenge democratic participation. Consequently, academic attention toward civic skills particularly digital literacy, critical thinking, and ethical communication

has grown as scholars seek to understand how citizens navigate complex information ecosystems and maintain civic responsibility in a digitally mediated democracy.

The findings from this bibliometric and systematic review highlight the urgent need to redefine civic skills for the twenty-first century. In an increasingly digitalized world, civic skills can no longer be confined to traditional notions of civic participation or political awareness. Instead, they must encompass digital competence, ethical awareness, and critical engagement with information ecosystems shaped by algorithms and misinformation. Civic skills should thus be understood as a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive, social, emotional, and digital capacities serving as the foundation for active, reflective, and responsible participation in contemporary democratic life.

Despite growing attention to the intersections of civic education and digital literacy, significant research gaps remain. First, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on marginalized groups, such as rural communities, indigenous peoples, and digital minorities, whose civic participation is often constrained by structural inequalities. Second, comparative studies across ASEAN countries could deepen understanding of how varying curricular policies and sociopolitical contexts shape the development of civic skills. Third, future research should explore critical and inclusive models of digital civic learning that move beyond instrumental approaches to technology, emphasizing social justice, media ethics, and civic resilience in an era of algorithmic governance.

CONCLUSION

This investigation examines 49 academic publications from the Scopus repository and elucidates five principal conclusions. Firstly, research on civic skills remains relatively scarce and underdeveloped, although the concept has gained increasing attention in recent decades alongside the global emphasis on civic participation, democratic engagement, and citizenship education. Secondly, studies on civic skills are distributed across various countries with diverse focal points, yet their distribution remains uneven and tends to concentrate within Western contexts, particularly in the United States and Europe. Thirdly, civic skills research is not limited to nations with established democratic traditions but is also emerging in developing countries that seek to strengthen civic education and public participation. Fourthly, the attributes of civic skills can be categorized into several key dimensions, namely critical thinking, communication, public problem solving, civic judgment, civic imagination, creativity, and collaboration. Fifthly, a conceptual framework of civic skills has been established in the literature, particularly highlighting their contribution to democracy and social cohesion. Finally, the researchers acknowledge several limitations in this study. The reviewed research primarily draws from specific databases, which may limit the generalizability of findings. Further studies should expand the data sources, explore emerging aspects of civic skills in the context of globalization and digital transformation, and employ diverse methodological approaches to minimize interpretational bias.

The implications of this study extend beyond theoretical contributions. This research helps address gaps in previous scholarship and offers more comprehensive insights into civic skills development across diverse cultural and educational contexts. Expanding the scope of civic skills research into underexplored regions will strengthen theoretical discourse and enhance practical strategies for promoting democratic participation, fostering social cohesion, and supporting sustainable development across varied cultural landscapes.

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