



Implementation of the values of compassion and politeness as the basis for the formation of civic virtue among students of PGRI Wiranegara University

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ABSTRACT

In campus life, students often display behavior lacking in friendliness and courtesy during their interactions. This hinders the development of holistic civic virtue. Conducting this research is crucial because the decline in interpersonal ethics within higher education has the potential to undermine the academic climate and democratic values. Unlike previous studies that largely focused on formal moral education, the novelty of this research lies in its examination of compassion and practical courtesy as the primary foundations of student civic virtue. The researchers employed a qualitative method involving in-depth interviews with informants selected through purposive sampling. The study was conducted at PGRI Wiranegara University, and all data obtained were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Specific findings indicate that students are experiencing a crisis of courtesy driven by high academic pressure and a lack of inclusive spaces for social interaction. Furthermore, the study reveals that an overly competitive campus environment tends to diminish empathetic sensitivity among students in their daily lives. These findings highlight the need to strengthen practical aspects through case-study-based learning, the creation of an institutional environment that fosters fairness, and the adjustment of academic policies to ensure they do not stifle the expression of civic virtue. Academically, this research contributes to enriching the literature on the sociology of education and offers a new approach for developing character-based curricula in higher education.

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1. Introduction

In today's era of globalization, higher education is demanded not only to focus on the transfer of technical knowledge (hard skills) but also to build a strong moral character as the foundation of civic virtue. Civic virtue refers to an attitude of responsibility, empathy for others, and active involvement in society based on ethical values. This aligns with Jubaedah and Malihah (2021),

who explain that civic virtue is the ability of citizens to position themselves within broader interests, such as prioritizing collective life, where citizens are accustomed to having a conscious willingness to optimize their social functional roles and the principles of democratic life. As a research focus, compassion has a direct effect on the formation of student character. In Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 3 states that the goal of national education is to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to intellectualize the nation's life (Asadullah & Nurhalin, 2021).

In Javanese, compassion translates to *welas asih*, which relates to the ability to understand the suffering of others. This is in line with the view of Hudzaifah (2025), who states that self-compassion is an attitude of compassion toward oneself, which includes self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and mindfulness. This perspective is further expanded by Tegar Yusteditera et al. (2025), who refer to classical Buddhist texts such as the Dhammapada and the Sutta Pitaka, where compassion is defined as a form of sincere concern for the suffering of others and an active desire to help them without expecting anything in return. Speaking of politeness, this value has significant benefits in upholding norms and etiquette in higher education, such as respecting lecturers who communicate well.

In terms of linguistics, Zulkarnain et al. (2024) explain that there are six principles of politeness: tact, generosity, respect, simplicity, consensus, and sympathy. These politeness principles must be applied to ensure that what is conveyed is well received while simultaneously preventing a shift in ethical standards on campus. Astri et al. (2024) define politeness as actions that demonstrate ethics or etiquette in communication. Each culture, of course, has varying ethical standards in defining politeness. Holmes, in Egi R. F. Ardiani and Ima Noviana (2021), further states that politeness involves selecting language forms that express social levels appropriately based on social distance or social status. Meanwhile, Leech's theory in Nursita et al. (2022) explains that every interaction requires politeness principles consisting of six maxims to maximize benefits/praise for others and minimize them for oneself: the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. The philosophy of compassion is still practiced in daily life and is considered one of the keys to creating a harmonious and peaceful society, as well as believed to be able to prevent various criminal acts (Oktawirawan et al., 2020).

Compassion encourages us to care more for others, creating a sense of unity that helps maintain mutual respect and harmony. It is an attitude in which individuals can feel the feelings of others as if they were their own. This statement is in line with Fa'izzarahman Prabawa and Alamat (2023), who define compassion as an open attitude that understands the suffering of others, does not attempt to avoid it, and is deeply committed to alleviating it. On the other hand, Yamani et al. (2024) explain that self-compassion encompasses the understanding that failure, shortcomings, and suffering are natural parts of human life; caring for oneself with love and kindness when facing challenges is its essence. Ayulanningsih and Karjuniwati (2020) add that when individuals have compassion for themselves, it encourages the acceptance of existing situations, making subjective well-being easier to achieve. This value is deeply rooted in the Javanese cultural philosophy of "*Wong Jawa iku nggone rasa*" (Javanese people are the home of feelings), which signifies that Javanese people think, behave, and act based on feelings (Nurfritri et al., 2024).

From a spiritual standpoint, Rusmiyati et al. (2025) state that Buddhist teachings, which are based on universal truth (Dhamma), provide highly relevant solutions to address moral crises through the principle of *karuṇā* (compassion). In Dhammapada verse 5, the Buddha stated that hatred will never end if repaid with hatred, but will only end when repaid with love. This sentence emphasizes the significance of empathy as a foundation for resolving social conflicts. Similarly, Apsari and Budi Utomo (2024) state that individuals with self-compassion aim to improve themselves and create positive life changes, thereby reducing self-harming behaviors.

The values of compassion and politeness can be utilized by students as a foundation to build civic values, specifically to become active citizens who act responsively, responsibly, and care deeply about the issues surrounding them. In a dynamic societal environment, the values of compassion and politeness are crucial for building civic virtue to demonstrate civic maturity in daily life. Civic virtue is capable of shaping the character of citizens who possess a strong civic spirit by implementing social life in accordance with democratic principles and national social values (Jubaedah & Malihah, 2021).

Furthermore, Subowo and Lonto (2025) explain that civic virtue is a collection of attitudes, commitments, and ethical habits necessary for the success of a democratic community. Fahrul (2025) argues that civic virtue reflects ethical habits that form the basis of social cohesion and democratic integrity through responsibility, social concern, and public participation. Rahmelia and Apandie (2023) state that civic virtue is an element of goodness that connects citizens with the state, and citizens with their communities.

In general, civic virtue can be defined as the attitude or desire of citizens to prioritize the common good over individual interests (Hidayati & Harmanto, 2017). This value is an aspect that must be developed for the welfare of society. Krissi Wahyuni Saragih, Sariaman Gultom, Imman Yusuf Sitinjak, Netty Marini, Juliardi Damanik, and Sinta Rahayu Saragih (2025) state in their study that education instilling civic values can help students recognize their rights and responsibilities, and encourage them to behave ethically. Mertha Sujana (2019) adds that civic virtue includes active citizen participation, egalitarian relationships, mutual trust and tolerance, cooperative living, solidarity, and community spirit.

This is aligned with Hidayati and Harmanto (2017), who state that good citizenship is formed by each individual in their social life, and Silitonga and Putra Sihombing (2021), who argue that civic virtue is concerned with morality in the face of increasingly powerful global forces. Although various previous studies have outlined the definitions and importance of these values, a significant research gap remains in the current academic literature. First, most prior studies (such as Oktawirawan et al., 2020; Fa'izzarahman Prabawa & Alamat, 2023) tend to examine compassion solely within the realms of individual psychology or conceptual theology (Rusmiyati et al., 2025), without integrating it practically with the formation of civic identity.

Second, research on linguistic politeness in higher education (e.g., Astri et al., 2024; Egi R. F. Ardiani & Ima Noviana, 2021) generally focuses on pure linguistic aspects and the etiquette of lecturer-student communication, yet overlooks its impact on active student participation in civic and social life. To date, there is a scarcity of research that comprehensively integrates compassion (from both local Javanese cultural and universal perspectives) and communicative politeness as a holistic instrument to cultivate university students' civic virtue. To bridge this gap, this study offers novelty through an integrative approach that merges internal dimensions (compassion based on the philosophy of "rasa" or deep-feeling) and external dimensions (communicative politeness) as a socioculturally grounded basis for reconstructing students' civic virtue.

Furthermore, this research takes a specific locus at PGRI Wiranegara University, an institution characterized by a heterogeneous academic environment operating within the dynamics of a transitional urban-traditional community.

Based on this background, the study is formulated to address the following research questions: (1) how are the values of compassion and politeness applied as a basis for forming civic virtue among students at PGRI Wiranegara University? and (2) what are the supporting and hindering factors in implementing these values within the campus environment? Consequently, this study explicitly aims to analyze in depth the effectiveness and patterns of implementing these two values in shaping students' civic virtue, while identifying the supporting and hindering factors of the implementation process to formulate recommendations for a civic-based character education model in higher education.

2. Method

Research design is a sequence of steps and techniques applied in collecting and analyzing data to determine the variables that are the focus of the study. In this study, the researcher wants to focus more on deepening and exploring in-depth information regarding the internalization of compassion and politeness values as the basis for developing civic virtue in students.

This aligns with Sugiyono's opinion in Safarudin et al. (2023), which states that qualitative research is a research method used to study natural conditions (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher serves as the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive, and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

According to Moleong in Rohman (2016), the pre-field steps or stages to be undertaken in qualitative research include compiling a research design, selecting a research location, managing research permits, tracking and assessing the research location, selecting and utilizing informants, and preparing research equipment. Meanwhile, according to Moleong in Sidiq and Choiri (2019), the stages of fieldwork consist of understanding the boundaries of the background and the researchers, establishing appearance, managing the researcher's relationships in the field, and determining the study duration.

The data collection process in this study involved observation, interviews, and documentation conducted with students who were taking Pancasila, Citizenship, and Religion courses at PGRI Wiranegara University, at locations mutually agreed upon by the researchers and participants, to gain a deeper understanding of the internalization of compassion and politeness as the basis for developing civic virtue in students.

To achieve this in-depth understanding, this study employs a descriptive qualitative research type, which is deemed the most appropriate approach to capture and describe the natural phenomena of character internalization without statistical manipulation. The primary research instrument is the researcher themselves (human instrument), supported by auxiliary instruments such as semi-structured interview guides, observation protocols, and field notes. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that the data gathered is rich and relevant to the research questions.

A total of 12 student informants—representing diverse academic majors who have completed or are currently taking Pancasila, Citizenship, and Religion courses—were chosen. This sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where recruitment and interviewing ceased once no new conceptual insights or themes emerged from subsequent participants. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the qualitative data, the researcher applied triangulation techniques, specifically source triangulation (comparing interview data across different students and cross-checking them with observational data and class documentation) and member checking (returning transcript summaries to the informants to confirm the accuracy of their statements).

The collected data were analyzed inductively using thematic analysis based on the Miles and Huberman framework, which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction (selecting, focusing, and transforming raw field notes), data display (organizing the reduced data into narrative text or matrices to permit conclusion drawing), and conclusion drawing/verification. Finally, this study strictly adhered to research ethics.

Prior to any data collection, the researchers obtained formal research permit approval from PGRI Wiranegara University. Additionally, all participants signed an informed consent form detailing the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and the strict confidentiality and anonymity of their identities throughout the publication process.

3. Analysis and Results

This study employed a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with three students at PGRI Wiranegara University who had completed courses in Pancasila, Citizenship, and Religion. Informants were selected purposively to capture a variety of learning experiences and involvement in student activities. The interviews focused on the internalization of compassion and politeness, and how these two values can shape civic virtue in students.

3.1. Informant 1 (Student of the Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program)

Informant stated that the Pancasila and religion materials emphasized the importance of empathy in everyday interactions. He cited the example of tutoring a classmate experiencing family problems: he felt compelled to offer time and emotional support without judgment. The informant mentioned that the concept of compassion was taught not just in theory, but through reflection assignments and case studies that encouraged concrete action. For this informant, compassion served as a catalyst for direct prosocial action; it strengthened the willingness to help others, which is a manifestation of civic virtue at the interpersonal level.

3.2. Infromant 2 (Religious Education Study Program Students)

Emphasized the aspect of politeness as a social norm that governs group interactions. He described the role of politeness in discussions within student organizations—reducing conflict and facilitating collective decision-making. In the interviews, the informant stated that religious instruction provides guidelines for polite behavior that are often repeated through communal worship practices and community activities. Politeness here functions as a regulatory mechanism that maintains social governance; when consistently applied, it supports the emergence of civic virtue in the form of the ability to cooperate and respect collective processes.

3.3. Informant 3 (Student of Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program)

Reported an internal conflict when the value of compassion clashed with the pressures of academic competition. He admitted to sometimes withholding compassionate actions due to concerns that the competition might cause personal harm to his own academic standings. He explained that despite understanding the importance of helping, exam situations and assignment burdens made him prioritize individual achievement. This suggests that the internalization of values is not always linear; institutional structures (academic competition) can inhibit the expression of civic virtue even when values have been taught, necessitating adjustments to policies or practices. To strengthen these raw findings, the interview transcripts were systematically analyzed through a three-stage coding process (open, axial, and selective coding) to identify interconnected themes and subthemes. This categorization process is summarized in the Coding Results Table below:

Table 1. Categorization process is summarized in the coding results

Main Theme	Subtheme (Code Category)	Concept / Relationship Among Themes
1. Internalization of Compassion (Emotional Catalyst)	Interpersonal Empathy	<i>Compassion</i> acts as an internal psychological (affective) driver that triggers students' social sensitivity before they take concrete actions in their environment.
	Real-Case Reflection	
2. Communicative Politeness (Social Regulator)	Altruistic Care	Politeness serves as an external behavioral (conative) instrument that regulates verbal interactions to maintain social harmony within the campus community.
	Organizational Discussion Ethics	
	Conflict Reduction	
3. Structural Barriers (Civic Dilemma)	Collective Respect	Competitive academic evaluation systems create cognitive dissonance, forcing students to suppress altruistic values in pursuit of individual interests.
	Academic Grade Pressure	
	Competitive Individualism	
	Role Conflict	

3.4. Discussion and Critical Analysis

Based on the coding table above, the relationship among themes indicates that the formation of complete *civic virtue* requires the integration of both the emotional dimension (*compassion*) and the behavioral regulation dimension (*politeness*). However, this process is frequently hindered by environmental structures (*structural barriers*). The findings from Informant 1 regarding *compassion* as a driver of prosocial action strongly reinforce the study by Oktawirawan et al. (2020), which posits that compassion is key to societal harmony. This similarity occurs because, at the interpersonal level, empathy honed through reflective case studies in religion and Pancasila classes successfully translates cognitive understanding into concrete action. However, a stark difference emerges when compared to the study by Fa'izzarahman Prabawa and Alamat (2023), which assumes that *compassion* automatically leads to altruistic actions without barriers. This research proves that the reality in the field is far more complex, revealing a "practical dissonance" caused by institutional pressures. Meanwhile, the role of politeness highlighted by Informant 2 as a conflict reducer within student organizations closely aligns with Leech's politeness maxims in Nursita et al. (2022).

Politeness consistently practiced in discussion spaces is proven to minimize personal ego friction to reach a mutual agreement (*consensus*). The unique finding at PGRI Wiranegara University indicates that politeness is not merely viewed as formal linguistic etiquette as studied by Astri et al. (2024), but has instead transformed into *social capital* that accelerates democratic collaboration among students. A critical analysis of Informant 3's findings exposes a critical weakness in the current character education system. While the university teaches moral nobility (*compassion*) on one hand, it simultaneously implements highly competitive and individualistic grading systems on the other, creating internal conflict for students. The curriculum structure, which heavily prioritizes cognitive-individual achievements, forces students to suppress their compassionate values to survive academic competition. This confirms the views of Silitonga and Putra Sihombing (2021) regarding the heavy moral challenges faced by citizens amidst the pressures of modern systems.

The theoretical implications of this study suggest that the cultivation of *civic virtue* cannot be approached partially through cognitive indoctrination in classrooms alone. Civic virtue theory must account for the holistic ecology of the academic environment. The academic contribution of this study highlights the urgent need to restructure learning evaluation models in higher education, shifting away from solely measuring individual performance toward recognizing collaborative social projects. Conceptually, this study contributes a new framework called the "Integrative Civic-Ethical Model", which positions *compassion* as the internal fuel for empathy and *politeness* as the external communication control. This model must be supported by a non-transactional institutional climate to successfully foster sustainable *civic virtue* in university students.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, several suggestions can be made to enhance civic and moral values in education. First, there is a need to strengthen the practical aspects and direct experiences in learning, such as through case studies, reflection, and activities that encourage concrete actions, so that the values of compassion and empathy can be deeply internalized by students. Second, educational institutions are advised to create an environment that supports the practice of these values, including by reducing excessive competitive pressure and paying attention to character aspects. Third, there is a need to adjust academic policies and practices so as not to hinder the expression of civic virtue, for example by instilling a culture of collaboration and mutual respect in the teaching and learning process. Moving forward, the integration of moral values and civic virtue must be an integral part of a personal curriculum that goes beyond academic competence. This study provides significant academic contributions by offering a fresh empirical perspective on how local cultural philosophy (such as Javanese

rasa) and communicative ethics (linguistic politeness) can be operationalized to reconstruct civic virtue in higher education.

Theoretically, these findings enrich the existing literature on civic education by demonstrating that the development of civic virtue is not a purely cognitive process, but rather a dynamic negotiation between internal affective catalysts (compassion) and external social regulators (politeness). Practically, the study implies that educators must pivot from conventional lecture-based instruction to experiential learning methods, such as service-learning and reflective community project designs, which allow students to practice empathy in real-world contexts. In terms of policy implications, higher education institutions must reform their evaluation systems; academic policies should balance individual grading with cooperative assessments and group-based projects to minimize the competitive friction that suppresses prosocial behaviors.

Despite these insights, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Because the research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a small, purposive sample size of three key student informants at PGRI Wiranegara University, the findings are deeply contextual and cannot be widely generalized to other cultural or institutional settings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported interview data may introduce social desirability bias. Future research should address these limitations by adopting mixed-methods designs, combining qualitative insights with large-scale surveys to quantitatively measure the correlation between academic competition and civic virtue across multiple universities. Additionally, future studies could explore longitudinal designs to track how the internalization of these values during university years actually translates into active civic participation after students graduate and enter the professional workforce.

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