

Phenomenological Analysis of Civic Engagement Education Transformation in Indonesia's Post-Covid-19 Democracy System

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of civic engagement education in Indonesia's democratic system post-COVID-19 is of particular concern, given the significant changes in mindsets, behaviors, and societal demands. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe the experiences and perceptions of young people involved in youth organizations regarding the changes occurring in civic engagement education post-COVID-19. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Subjects included academics, students, government officials, community activists or NGOs, and the general public involved in or affected by civic engagement education. Data collection techniques included interviews, participant observation, and other supporting instruments. Data analysis was conducted inductively. Interview transcripts and observation results were analyzed in depth to identify emerging themes and patterns. The results of this study indicate that although civic engagement education in youth organizations has been quite successful in informing students about the importance of political participation, feelings of skepticism and apathy towards politics continue to hinder youth from actively participating. This poses a challenge for future civic engagement education, which must create a stronger connection between the knowledge taught and the social and political realities faced by young people. Furthermore, there is a need to further integrate civic engagement education into young people's daily experiences, not just the theory learned in classes or seminars. Civic engagement education has undergone a transformation post-COVID-19, yet many young people feel disconnected from Indonesia's democratic process.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Civic engagement education is a crucial aspect in the formation of a democratic society (Alscher et al., 2022; Ardoïn et al., 2022). The context of Indonesia, which became the third-largest democracy in the world and the first in Southeast Asia in 2022, highlights the importance of fostering civic engagement education within the community, particularly following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This

pandemic has not only presented health, economic, and social challenges but has also transformed the educational landscape and the way citizens interact (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Khalifa et al., 2021).

Throughout its dynamic journey, Indonesia continues to face challenges and opportunities in shaping and strengthening its democratic system (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2022). The democratic system plays a central role in ensuring public participation, safeguarding human rights, and upholding the principles of justice. In efforts to maintain and improve the quality of democracy, the role of civic engagement education is crucial. An study evaluated how collaboration among students influences the ecology and deliberative practices inherent in education, particularly online (Archambault et al., 2022; Chadha, 2023; Sato et al., 2025). Therefore, the relationship between societal dynamics and Indonesia's democratic system can be considered very positive.

The transformation of civic engagement education in Indonesia's democratic system post-COVID-19 is of particular concern, given the significant changes in societal mindsets, behaviors, and demands (Ssenyonga, 2021; Agustino et al., 2023). The public's understanding of democratic principles, active participation in the political process, and rights and obligations as citizens may fundamentally change due to the impact of this pandemic. Varshney Ashutosh emphasizes the importance of integrated networks of civic engagement in preventing communal violence (Varshney & Gubler, 2013). Varshney argues that riots are less likely to occur in areas where Hindus and Muslims have strong associative ties and interact with each other in civic activities. Therefore, a discussion of the concrete conditions under which civic engagement is understood is intriguing in this study.

Central Jakarta, one of the centers of political and social activity in Indonesia, hosts various youth organizations that actively influence the region's political dynamics. In 2022, the Jakarta Statistics Agency outlined three indicators and aspects of the Indonesian Democracy Index: Freedom, Equality, and the Capacity of Democratic Institutions. These indicators are then used to measure the sustainability of democracy in Jakarta, which is related to the social conditions of the community, including youth organizations.

Furthermore, the increasingly rapid adoption of information and communication technology is also a crucial element in the transformation of civic engagement education (Mihailidis, 2018; Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). Online learning and the use of social media to disseminate political information can influence how people engage in political life and the democratic process (Intyaswati et al., 2021). A study states that online civic engagement through social media can provide a platform for citizens to express their opinions and participate in public discussions (Mulyono et al., 2023).

A research conducted shows that fostering civic literacy through student organizations is expected to be a solution and answer to concerns about the future of Indonesian democracy (Maulana & Bainus, 2022; Santoso et al., 2024). Research gaps identified in this article include: This study lacks an in-depth examination of fostering civic literacy through student organizations and its impact on political participation in Indonesia. It also examines youth involvement in online and offline civic activities and

how such engagement influences their participation in various political issues. Subsequent research, written by [Nurhajati et al. \(2022\)](#), reveals the role of the younger generation in countering Covid-19 hoaxes and identifies the main gatekeepers among Indonesian youth in the fight against them. However, there is a lack of research exploring the long-term effects of the pandemic on youth civic engagement and development. This article may not delve deeply into how their experiences during the pandemic can shape future civic behavior as they grow older. A shortcoming of this study is the minimal emphasis on the role of social institutions in promoting civic education and youth engagement during times of crisis. Understanding how schools and community organizations adapted their civic education programs during the pandemic can provide valuable insights.

Subsequent research by [Evans et al. \(2020\)](#) found that current approaches to civic engagement pedagogy vary in emphasis and complexity across educational contexts and countries, reflecting different cultural and historical influences. One gap in this research lies in the need for a more comprehensive and consistent approach that can connect theoretical frameworks with practical implementation, thereby adequately preparing young people for active participation in civic life.

Educational transformation takes us on an in-depth journey to understand how education can change and evolve according to the demands of the times ([Garcia-Huidobro et al., 2017](#); [Sheninger & Murray, 2017](#); [Levin et al., 2025](#)). This involves identifying, understanding, and adapting to changes in society, technology, and the global environment. In the context of this research, a theory of educational transformation will be central to understanding how civic engagement education can respond to post-pandemic dynamics ([Vallo Hult et al., 2023](#)).

The theory used by researchers in this study stems from Jack Mezirow's thinking on learning transformation. This theory states that learning is not only about acquiring new knowledge or skills but also about transforming one's perspective and worldview ([Hyde, 2021](#); [Segers & De Greef, 2021](#); [Nasukah & Winarti, 2021](#)). Mezirow argues that transformative learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on their assumptions, beliefs, and values, and then use this reflection to change their perspectives and behaviors ([Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020](#)).

In the context of education, Mezirow's transformative learning theory suggests that educators must create learning environments that encourage critical reflection and dialogue ([Liu, 2017](#); [Hoggan & Kloubert, 2020](#)). This approach to education emphasizes the importance of empowering learners to take an active role in their learning and to challenge their assumptions and beliefs ([Zanchetta et al., 2017](#)). In doing so, learners can develop a more profound understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them, which can lead to personal and social transformation. This approach not only considers physical changes in curriculum or teaching methods but also explores deeper conceptual shifts in education ([Weinberg et al., 2020](#)).

In this regard, consideration of how civic engagement education can shape active, critical, and engaged citizens in democratic processes takes center stage. This

transformation speaks not only to external changes but also to shifting the paradigms, values, and principles underlying civic engagement education.

The phenomenological analysis in this study will provide in-depth insights into the experiences and perceptions of youth in their youth organizations regarding the transformation of civic engagement education. This phenomenological approach will help develop a rich understanding of how society is coping with changes in the context of civic engagement education post-COVID-19, thereby making a meaningful contribution to improving future educational policies and practices. Therefore, this study presents a novel approach to highlighting the experiences and perceptions of young people involved in youth organizations regarding the changes occurring in civic engagement education post-COVID-19.

Building upon the research problem background above, the researcher focused on answering the following questions: What are the experiences and perceptions of young people involved in youth organizations regarding the changes in civic engagement education post-COVID-19? And how does the transformation of civic engagement education in youth organizations affect youth political and social participation in Indonesia's democratic system?

2. METHOD

The approach used in this research is a qualitative method with a phenomenological. Phenomenology is a method used to understand and describe an individual's subjective experience of a phenomenon. In the context of this research, a phenomenological approach was chosen because it provides an appropriate framework for exploring meaning and in-depth understanding of the transformation of civic engagement education post-COVID-19. This research uses a qualitative approach, allowing researchers to explore and understand the phenomenon in depth from the perspective of participants. This approach helps researchers understand the social and cultural context surrounding the transformation of civic engagement education. In general, the following is a flowchart model of the phenomenological data analysis process in Figure 1.

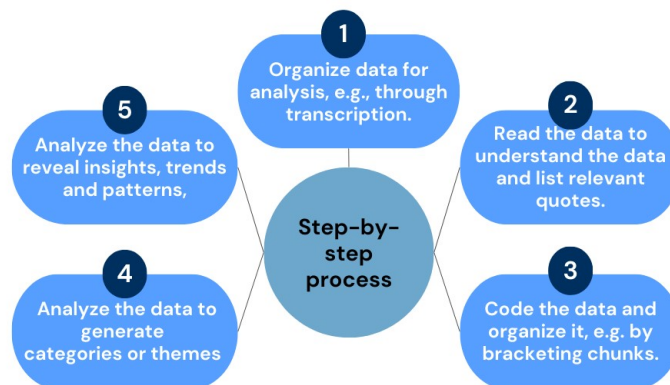


Figure 1. Phenomenological Data Analysis Process

Research subjects were selected through purposeful sampling. Subjects included academics, students, government officials, community activists or NGOs, and the public involved in or affected by civic engagement education.

Data Collection Techniques

- Interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as the primary method of data collection. Interview questions were designed to encourage participants to speak freely about their experiences with the transformation of civic engagement education post-COVID-19. Interviews will be recorded and analyzed in depth.

- Participatory Observation

Participatory observation techniques were used to gain a direct understanding of the situations and interactions occurring within the context of civic engagement education. Observations were conducted by researchers who also participated in the educational activities.

- Supporting Data Collection

Analysis of relevant educational documents and materials was also conducted to support the findings from the interviews and observations. These documents included curricula, teaching guides, and civic engagement education literature.

- Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process was conducted inductively. Interview transcripts and observation results were analyzed in depth to identify emerging themes and patterns. This approach allowed researchers to explore meaning and construct shared understandings from the collected data.

- Validity and Reliability

Data validity was ensured through triangulation, comparing findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Reliability was maintained through consistent and systematic reflection throughout the analysis process.

- Research Ethics

This research adhered to the principles of research ethics, including obtaining ethical clearance from relevant institutions and ensuring participant confidentiality and privacy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in 2024, focusing on the experiences and perceptions of youth involved in youth organizations in Central Jakarta regarding the urgency of civic engagement education post-COVID-19 and its impact on their political and social participation in Indonesia's democratic system.

This research involved several youth organizations in Central Jakarta, considering that these organizations have sufficient cadres who can experience the dynamics related to civic engagement education, both theoretically and practically. In-depth interviews were conducted with youth active in these organizations, who have diverse educational backgrounds, experiences, and roles in social and political activities.

The results of this study reveal two main issues related to the research questions: first, the experiences and perceptions of youth regarding civic engagement education post-COVID-19, and second, how this transformation of civic engagement education affects youth political and social participation in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the 2024 Jakarta gubernatorial election, which recorded a significant abstention rate.

Youth Experiences and Perceptions of the Urgency of Civic Engagement Education Post-Covid-19

Young people involved in youth organizations recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Indonesia's social, political, and economic life. With the implementation of social restrictions, many young people feel isolated from formal political processes, even though civic engagement education continues to operate in online and semi-online formats. Most respondents stated that during the pandemic, they felt their awareness of the importance of political participation had increased, but the challenges of directly contributing to politics remained significant.

They felt that civic engagement education post-pandemic would be even more important because it provided them with an understanding of how they could play an active role in building a healthier democracy. However, despite numerous youth organizations holding training and discussions on voting rights and political participation, most young people admitted they remained skeptical about the effectiveness of their participation. Some felt that, despite being provided with a more profound understanding of civic engagement, existing Indonesian politics did not provide much space for their aspirations.

Transformation of Civic Engagement Education in Youth Organizations and Its Influence on Youth Political and Social Participation

Civic engagement education in youth organizations post-COVID-19 has undergone significant transformations, both in terms of methods and content ([Kwan, 2022](#)). Many organizations have begun adapting more interactive and practical approaches, such as political discussions based on social issues that are more relevant to young people's lives, as well as hands-on training on how to participate in political campaigns and other social activities. This participation-based approach seeks to encourage young people not only to understand civic engagement theory but also to directly engage in democratic processes.

However, despite these changes in educational methods, most young people feel that the civic engagement education they receive is insufficient to overcome their apathy toward politics ([Hinchey & Konkol, 2021](#)). This was evident in their participation in the 2024 Jakarta gubernatorial election, which recorded a high abstention rate of nearly 50%. Young people interviewed in this study revealed that, although they received education on the importance of voting and engaging in the political process, many felt that no candidate truly represented their aspirations. This distrust of the political system and the available options led them to choose to abstain from voting as a form of protest against a system they perceived as not accommodating their interests.

Most young people admitted that although civic engagement education taught them to care more about social and political issues, they felt their voices were not sufficiently heard in the Indonesian political system. Dissatisfaction with the candidates in the regional elections, along with a lack of confidence in the political system's ability to bring about change, led to feelings of alienation, and ultimately, they chose not to vote.

The results of the 2024 Jakarta regional elections, which showed a high rate of abstentions, align with the findings of this study. Although young people in Central Jakarta generally recognize the importance of political participation, they feel trapped in a system that does not provide space for their aspirations. Distrust of the existing regional head candidates and dissatisfaction with the policies implemented by the previous government are the main factors driving them not to vote. Some young people's abstention is a way to express their disappointment with politicians' inability to represent their interests.

This research shows that although civic engagement education in youth organizations has been quite successful in offering perspectives on the importance of political participation, feelings of skepticism and apathy towards politics continue to hinder young people from actively participating. This is a challenge for civic engagement education in the future, which must create a greater connection between the knowledge taught and the social and political realities faced by young people (Bidandi et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2024).



Figure 2. Research Recommendation Infographic

1. Developing Civic Engagement Education That Is More Integrated with Youth's Social Lives

This research demonstrates the need to better integrate civic engagement education into youth's daily experiences, not just the theory learned in classes or seminars. Therefore, developing programs that connect civic engagement to social and political issues relevant to youth, such as dissatisfaction with the political system or declining participation in elections, needs to be prioritized. This will help increase youth's understanding of how they can contribute to democratic life and provide a

greater sense of urgency to the importance of active participation in the political process.

2. Improving Technology-Based Civic Engagement Education Methods

This research also found that civic engagement education has undergone a transformation post-COVID-19, yet many youths feel disconnected from Indonesia's democratic process. One potential solution is to strengthen the use of technology in political education and civic engagement (Asimakopoulou et al., 2025). Further research could examine the influence of social media, digital applications, and online platforms on increasing youth political awareness, as well as ways to engage them more actively in political campaigns and discussions. Exploring how technology can facilitate greater accessibility and participation in democratic processes would be an important contribution to political literacy among youth.

3. Focus on Social and Political Interventions to Reduce the Abstention Rate Among Youth

The nearly 50% abstention rate in the 2024 Jakarta gubernatorial election indicates that many youths do not feel compelled to participate in the electoral process. Future research could focus on the psychological and social factors contributing to this non-participation. This includes understanding how political apathy develops among youth and interventions that can be implemented to reduce this apathy. For example, further research could examine community-based programs that encourage youth to participate more actively in politics, both through social organizations and during elections. A more personalized and experience-based approach could help foster a stronger connection between youth and the democratic system they choose.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that although civic engagement education in youth organizations has been quite successful in providing insight into the importance of political participation, feelings of skepticism and apathy towards politics continue to hinder young people from actively participating. This poses a challenge for future civic engagement education, which must better connect the knowledge taught to the social and political realities faced by young people. Furthermore, there is a need to better integrate civic engagement education into young people's daily experiences, rather than simply as theory learned in classes or seminars. Civic engagement education post-COVID-19 has undergone a transformation, yet many young people feel disconnected from Indonesia's democratic process.

As suggestion, further research could be conducted to explore more deeply the appropriate forms and approaches to connect civic engagement with the real social lives of youth.

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