

The Implementation of the Problem-Based Learning Model in Developing Civic Disposition among Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Civic education in elementary schools plays a crucial role in developing students' civic disposition; however, current learning practices still predominantly emphasize cognitive aspects rather than affective and behavioral dimensions (Torney-Purta et al., 2015; Zubaedi, 2015). This study aims to systematically review research on the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in developing civic disposition among elementary school students. The method used is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA framework, including identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages. A total of 15 articles published between 2015 and 2025 were analyzed from SINTA-indexed journals, reputable international journals, and Scopus-indexed sources. The findings reveal that PBL enhances student engagement, critical thinking, collaboration, and social responsibility (Hmelo-Silver, 2015; Barrows, 2012; Anazifa & Djukri, 2017). Although most studies focus on cognitive outcomes, PBL also contributes to civic disposition development, including social awareness, participation, and responsibility. However, studies explicitly examining civic disposition remain limited. Therefore, further research is needed to strengthen empirical evidence.

Keywords: *Problem-Based Learning, civic disposition, elementary education, civic education, systematic literature review*

Abstrak

Pendidikan kewarganegaraan di sekolah dasar memainkan peran penting dalam mengembangkan disposisi kewarganegaraan siswa; namun, praktik pembelajaran saat ini masih didominasi oleh aspek kognitif daripada dimensi afektif dan perilaku (Torney-Purta dkk., 2015; Zubaedi, 2015). Studi ini bertujuan untuk secara sistematis meninjau penelitian tentang implementasi Pembelajaran Berbasis Masalah (PBL) dalam mengembangkan disposisi kewarganegaraan di kalangan siswa sekolah dasar. Metode yang digunakan adalah Tinjauan Literatur Sistematis (SLR) mengikuti kerangka kerja PRISMA, termasuk tahap identifikasi, penyaringan, kelayakan, dan inklusi. Sebanyak 15 artikel yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2015 dan 2025 dianalisis dari jurnal yang terindeks SINTA, jurnal internasional terkemuka, dan sumber yang terindeks Scopus. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa PBL meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, pemikiran kritis, kolaborasi, dan tanggung jawab sosial (Hmelo-Silver, 2015; Barrows, 2012; Anazifa & Djukri, 2017). Meskipun sebagian besar studi berfokus pada hasil kognitif, PBL juga berkontribusi pada pengembangan disposisi kewarganegaraan, termasuk kesadaran sosial, partisipasi, dan tanggung jawab. Namun, studi yang secara eksplisit meneliti disposisi kewarganegaraan masih terbatas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk memperkuat bukti empiris.

Kata kunci: *Pembelajaran Berbasis Masalah, disposisi kewarganegaraan, pendidikan dasar, pendidikan kewarganegaraan, tinjauan literatur sistematis*



INTRODUCTION

Civic education in elementary schools plays a fundamental role in shaping students' character and preparing them to become responsible and participatory citizens. At this level, education is not merely oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also emphasizes the internalization of values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect democratic life (Torney-Purta et al., 2015; Zubaedi, 2015). One of the essential components of civic education is civic disposition, which refers to a set of attitudes and behavioral tendencies such as responsibility, social awareness, cooperation, tolerance, and active participation in social life. These dispositions are crucial because they influence how individuals engage with their communities and contribute to the sustainability of democratic societies.

However, in practice, the implementation of civic education in elementary schools still faces several challenges. Learning activities tend to focus more on cognitive achievement, such as mastering concepts, definitions, and factual knowledge, rather than fostering affective and behavioral aspects (Hosnan, 2016; Kemendikbud, 2021). This condition creates a gap between students' understanding of civic concepts and their actual behavior in daily life. For instance, students may be able to explain the importance of cooperation or responsibility, yet they often show low participation in group activities, lack of concern for their environment, or demonstrate limited discipline in classroom settings. These phenomena indicate that civic values have not been optimally internalized.

Empirical findings also support this condition. Several studies report that students' civic knowledge is often not accompanied by corresponding civic attitudes and behaviors (Sari & Wahyudi, 2019; Kurniawan et al., 2022). In many cases, students exhibit passive learning behavior, limited engagement in discussions, and minimal involvement in solving real-life problems within their school environment. This suggests that the instructional approaches used in classrooms have not fully facilitated the development of civic disposition. Therefore, there is a need for innovative learning models that not only enhance cognitive outcomes but also foster students' social and moral development.

In line with the demands of 21st-century education, learning is expected to promote critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, alongside character development (OECD, 2019). The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia further emphasizes the importance of developing the Pancasila Student Profile, which includes values such as independence, cooperation, critical reasoning, and global diversity (Kemendikbud, 2021). These competencies are closely related to civic disposition, highlighting the need for learning approaches that integrate knowledge acquisition with the development of attitudes and values in meaningful contexts.

One instructional model that is considered relevant to addressing these challenges is Problem-Based Learning (PBL). PBL is a student-centered learning approach that uses real-world problems as the starting point for learning activities (Barrows, 2012; Hmelo-Silver, 2015). Through PBL, students are encouraged to identify problems, gather information, collaborate with peers, and propose solutions based on critical and reflective thinking. This approach provides opportunities for students to engage actively in the learning process and to experience social interactions that reflect real-life situations.

Previous studies have shown that PBL has a positive impact on various aspects of learning. For example, research by Anazifa and Djukri (2017) indicates that PBL improves students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Similarly, Sulastrri et al. (2018) found that PBL enhances collaboration and social interaction among students. Other studies also report that PBL increases student engagement and participation in classroom activities (Setyawati et al., 2025; Hartati & Hong, 2023). These findings suggest that PBL has the potential to support the development of civic disposition, as it promotes active participation, cooperation, and social responsibility.

Despite these positive findings, most existing studies tend to focus primarily on cognitive outcomes or general learning achievements. The development of civic disposition is often treated as a secondary or implicit outcome and is rarely examined as the main variable of investigation. Furthermore, there is still a lack of systematic studies that synthesize research findings related to the role of PBL in developing civic disposition in elementary education. This indicates the presence of a research gap that needs to be addressed.

Based on the above considerations, this study seeks to systematically review existing literature on the implementation of Problem-Based Learning in developing civic disposition among elementary school students. The research is guided by the following question: How does the implementation of Problem-Based Learning contribute to the development of civic disposition in elementary school students? Accordingly, the objective of this study is to analyze and synthesize research findings related to the role of PBL in fostering civic disposition, as well as to identify existing research gaps and provide recommendations for future studies.

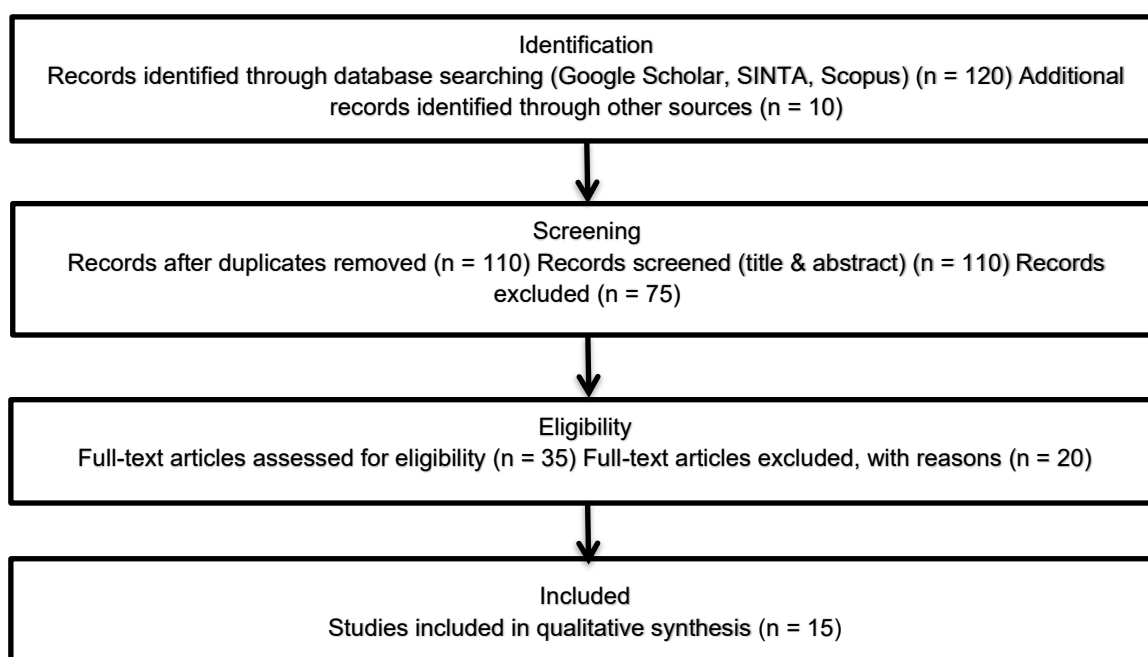
Through a systematic literature review approach, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between PBL and civic disposition. Practically, it offers insights for teachers, schools, and policymakers in designing more effective and meaningful learning strategies to support the development of students' civic character in elementary education.

METHOD

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method based on the PRISMA framework (Page et al., 2021). The stages include identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

Literature was collected from Google Scholar, SINTA-indexed journals, and Scopus-indexed journals using keywords such as "Problem-Based Learning," "civic disposition," "civic education," and "elementary education." Inclusion criteria included empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025, relevance to PBL implementation, and discussion of civic-related outcomes.

A total of 120 articles were identified, 110 screened after duplicates removal, 35 assessed for eligibility, and 15 included in the final analysis. The PRISMA flow diagram is presented in Figure 1.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the *Systematic Literature Review* indicate that studies examining the implementation of *Problem-Based Learning* (PBL) in the context of elementary education reflect various benefits of this approach in enhancing student engagement, critical thinking skills, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities. Although not all studies explicitly use the term *civic disposition*, their findings implicitly include relevant indicators such as collaboration, social responsibility, active engagement, and reflection on real-life issues in students' surrounding environments—elements that are integral to civic disposition.

Several studies that empirically examined PBL in Civics (*Civic Education /PPKn*) learning reported that PBL provides more meaningful and relevant learning experiences. For example, Hartati and Hong (2024) found that the implementation of PBL in elementary Civics classes increased student engagement, problem-solving skills, and comprehensive conceptual understanding compared to conventional instructional approaches.

Similarly, Setyawati et al. (2025) reported that PBL enhanced students' active participation, critical thinking abilities, and group collaboration in Civics learning on government structure topics. These findings suggest that PBL creates a learning environment that encourages students' social activity. This result is consistent with other studies showing that PBL not only improves academic learning outcomes but also expands students' social skills through collaboration and group interaction.

Fiestawa et al. (2025) added that PBL not only increases learning engagement but also improves students' argumentative skills in Pancasila and Civics subjects. The improvement in argumentation skills represents an important competence reflecting students' awareness in articulating ideas, considering multiple perspectives, and respecting peers' opinions—competencies closely related to civic disposition dimensions such as active participation and social skills.

Furthermore, research by Naima (2025) demonstrated that PBL significantly increased student engagement in Civics (*PPKn*) learning and enhanced their ability to relate learning concepts to real social situations within the school environment. Students who were previously less motivated became more active and reflective in discussions, particularly when addressing real-life issues such as cleanliness, social awareness, and group cooperation.

Other studies also reported positive impacts of PBL in different contexts which, although not explicitly measuring civic disposition, remain relevant to the development of its dimensions in elementary schools. For instance, studies examining PBL in Social Studies learning found that PBL increased active engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration among students—key elements of civic disposition.

Table 1. Synthesis of Review Results from 15 Research Articles on PBL and Civic Disposition in Elementary Schools (2015–2025)

No	Author(s) & Year	Journal (Index)	Context & Method	Research Focus	Key Findings Related to Civic Disposition
1	Yusof & Jamaludin (2018)	International Journal of Instruction (Scopus)	Elementary school, quasi-experimental	PBL & civic engagement	PBL increased student participation, collaboration, and social responsibility

No	Author(s) & Year	Journal (Index)	Context & Method	Research Focus	Key Findings Related to Civic Disposition
2	Setyawati et al. (2025)	Cakrawala Pendidikan Dasar (SINTA)	Elementary school, classroom action research	PBL in Civics	Active participation, discussion, and students' sense of responsibility increased
3	Hartati & Hong (2023)	Journal of Basic Education Research (International)	Elementary school, experimental	PBL in Civics	Student engagement and collaborative attitudes increased significantly
4	Fiestawa et al. (2025)	Indonesian Journal of Primary Education (SINTA)	Elementary school, experimental	PBL & argumentation	Argumentation skills and respect for others' opinions improved
5	Naima (2025)	Jurnal Studi Tindakan Edukatif (SINTA)	Elementary school, classroom action research	PBL in Civics	Social awareness and student engagement increased
6	Sari & Wahyudi (2019)	Journal of Social Studies Education Research (Scopus)	Elementary school, experimental	PBL & Social Studies	Student collaboration and social awareness developed
7	Oktaviani et al. (2020)	Universal Journal of Educational Research (Scopus)	Elementary school, quasi-experimental	PBL & character	Responsibility and discipline attitudes improved
8	Rahmawati & Prasetyo (2021)	Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar (SINTA)	Elementary school, qualitative	PBL & environment	Students' environmental awareness increased
9	Hmelo-Silver (2015)	Educational Psychology Review (Scopus)	Review study	PBL	PBL supports collaborative learning and social attitudes
10	Widodo et al. (2019)	International Journal of Learning (Scopus)	Elementary school, experimental	PBL & participation	Active participation and learning responsibility increased
11	Lestari & Supardi (2020)	Jurnal Civics (SINTA)	Elementary school,	PBL in Civics	Democratic attitudes and

No	Author(s) & Year	Journal (Index)	Context & Method	Research Focus	Key Findings Related to Civic Disposition
			classroom action research		tolerance developed
12	Anazifa & Djukri (2017)	Journal of Education and Learning (Scopus)	Elementary school, experimental	PBL	Critical thinking and collaboration skills improved
13	Kurniawan et al. (2022)	Civic-Culture Journal (International)	Elementary school, qualitative	PBL & civic values	Students' caring values and social participation increased
14	Sulastri et al. (2018)	Elementary Education Online (Scopus)	Elementary school, experimental	PBL	Social attitudes and student collaboration increased
15	Nurhayati & Suyanto (2023)	Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter (SINTA)	Elementary school, qualitative	PBL & character	Responsibility and social concern developed

DISCUSSION

The review of the 15 selected articles indicates that the implementation of *Problem-Based Learning* (PBL) in elementary schools consistently has a positive impact on the development of aspects representing students' civic disposition. Although most studies do not explicitly use the term *civic disposition*, the indicators employed—such as collaboration, responsibility, social awareness, tolerance, and active participation—are integral components of civic disposition.

The first dominant theme is the enhancement of student engagement and active participation. The reviewed studies demonstrate that PBL encourages students to be directly involved in the learning process through discussion, inquiry, and real-world problem-solving. This active engagement reflects a form of social participation that forms the foundation of civic disposition, particularly within elementary education contexts.

The second theme concerns the development of collaboration and social skills. Through group activities in PBL, students learn to share roles, respect others' opinions, and take responsibility for collective decisions. These findings indicate that PBL provides meaningful social experiences that allow students to internalize civic values contextually.

The third theme relates to social and environmental awareness. Several studies that employed social and environmental issues as PBL contexts reported increased student awareness of surrounding issues. Students not only understood problems cognitively but also demonstrated caring attitudes and a willingness to contribute to solutions. This reinforces the notion that PBL has the potential to connect learning with authentic civic practices.

Nevertheless, the review also reveals a research gap, namely the limited number of studies that explicitly position civic disposition as a primary variable using standardized measurement instruments. Most studies still treat civic disposition as an indirect outcome of PBL implementation. Therefore, further focused and in-depth research is needed to strengthen empirical evidence regarding the role of PBL in developing civic disposition among elementary school students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) of 15 research articles published between 2015 and 2025, it can be concluded that the implementation of the *Problem Based Learning* (PBL) model in elementary schools demonstrates strong and consistent potential in supporting the development of students' *civic disposition*. Although most of the reviewed studies did not explicitly position *civic disposition* as the primary variable, the reported empirical findings indicate that PBL implementation significantly contributes to strengthening various civic attitudes and values, such as active engagement in learning, social responsibility, collaboration skills, concern for the environment and community, tolerance, and students' social participation.

The results of the review show that the main characteristics of PBL—namely the use of real-world problems as learning triggers, collaborative group work, inquiry processes, open discussions, and reflection—create authentic and meaningful learning experiences for elementary school students. Through these processes, students do not merely act as passive recipients of information but become active agents involved in understanding social issues in their surroundings and collaboratively seeking solutions. Such learning experiences enable students to internalize civic values through direct practice, so that the development of *civic disposition* extends beyond the cognitive domain to include affective and behavioral dimensions.

Conceptually, the findings of this review reinforce the view that PBL is a learning approach aligned with the goals of civic education and character education in elementary schools. PBL is able to bridge the acquisition of academic knowledge with the contextual formation of civic attitudes and values. By engaging students with real-life problems relevant to their daily experiences—such as issues of cleanliness, cooperation, justice, or social concern—PBL helps students understand the meaning of being responsible citizens from an early age.

Nevertheless, this review also identifies several limitations in the studies examined. First, most studies continue to focus their evaluation of PBL effectiveness on cognitive aspects and academic learning outcomes, while the measurement of *civic disposition* is generally conducted implicitly through indicators of social attitudes and participation. Second, the limited use of standardized and comprehensive instruments to measure *civic disposition* means that research findings have not yet fully captured the depth of students' civic disposition development. Third, studies employing long-term research designs that can reveal the sustainability of PBL's impact on the formation of elementary school students' civic disposition remain relatively scarce.

Based on these findings, the theoretical implications of this review suggest that *civic disposition* should be understood as a multidimensional construct that can be developed through innovative learning approaches such as PBL. This review enriches the existing literature by demonstrating that PBL is not only relevant for enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills but also makes an important contribution to the development of students' civic dispositions. Therefore, the integration of the *civic disposition* concept into PBL studies needs to be strengthened both conceptually and methodologically in future research.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this review have implications for teachers, schools, and educational policymakers. Elementary school teachers can utilize PBL as an effective learning strategy to foster students' responsibility, cooperation, and social concern through contextual learning activities. Schools can encourage the more systematic implementation of PBL within curricula and lesson planning, particularly in Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) and other relevant subjects. Meanwhile, for policymakers, these findings may serve as a basis for formulating educational policies

that emphasize character strengthening and the development of the Pancasila Student Profile.

As recommendations for future research, it is suggested that forthcoming studies explicitly position *civic disposition* as the main focus of investigation by employing valid, reliable, and standardized measurement instruments. Longitudinal research designs should also be developed to examine the long-term effects of PBL implementation on the formation of elementary school students' civic dispositions. In addition, future research may explore variations in the context of PBL implementation, such as differences in school characteristics, social environments, and the integration of PBL with other learning models or approaches.

Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of the *Problem Based Learning* model in elementary schools represents a promising and relevant learning strategy for supporting the development of students' *civic disposition*. This review is expected to serve as an initial reference for the advancement of more focused research and instructional practices aimed at shaping a young generation that is characterized, caring, and responsible as citizens.

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