

Integrating Sapta Dharma Virtues into Civic Education in Indonesia for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

In an increasingly interconnected world, civic education is expected to prepare citizens to address global challenges while preserving cultural identity and ethical values. Local wisdom offers an important foundation for fostering civic character and supporting sustainable development. This research explores the integration of Sapta Dharma values into civic education to promote global citizenship and sustainable development. As an indigenous Indonesian belief system, Sapta Dharma emphasizes respect for human dignity, harmonious living, honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, mutual respect, and social solidarity.

Using a qualitative case study approach and descriptive qualitative methods, this research explores the implementation of Sapta Dharma values in community-based character education in Genting Village, Jambu District, Semarang Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving Sapta Dharma adherents and various community stakeholders. The findings reveal that the integration of Sapta Dharma values contributes to the development of civic character, as reflected in attitudes of tolerance, social participation, respect for diversity, and collective responsibility. These values also support the formation of globally minded citizens who are capable of balancing their local cultural identity with universal principles of citizenship. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that Sapta Dharma values are aligned with the goals of sustainable development by promoting social cohesion, inclusive participation, ethical behavior, and community well-being.

This study highlights the importance of local wisdom as a foundation for developing culturally responsive civic education. The integration of Sapta Dharma values demonstrates that principles rooted in local traditions and culture can make a significant contribution to global citizenship education while supporting sustainable development efforts in diverse societies. The findings provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and civic education practitioners seeking to strengthen civic education through culturally grounded values that remain relevant to contemporary global needs and challenges.

Keywords: Sapta Dharma, Civic Education, Global Citizenship

Introduction

Global developments in the 21st century require citizenship education to focus not only on the acquisition of knowledge, but also on character building, social responsibility, and awareness as global citizens. UNESCO emphasizes that Global Citizenship Education (GCED) “aims to be transformative, building the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to enable learners to contribute to a more inclusive, just, and peaceful world” (UNESCO, 2015). Thus, citizenship education must cultivate citizens who

can appreciate diversity, participate in democratic life, and contribute to sustainable development. One approach considered effective is integrating local wisdom values into character education, as this has been shown to strengthen civic knowledge, civic skills, and most importantly civic disposition through contextual learning experiences. The integration of local cultural values not only strengthens civic knowledge but also shapes civic disposition through the development of responsibility, social

concern, respect for diversity, and active participation in community life (Fahmi et al., 2025). Rahmawati et al. (2024) demonstrate that local wisdom is an effective learning resource in civic education because it connects cultural identity with the values of democracy, tolerance, and multicultural life. One approach considered effective for strengthening civic character is community-based character education that draws on the values of local wisdom. Local values that have taken root in community life possess social legitimacy, making them easier to internalize through real-life experiences than through learning that takes place solely in the classroom. Various studies show that integrating local wisdom into character education can enhance tolerance, social concern, community participation, and a sense of responsibility as citizens (Lestari & Tirtoni, 2021; Susanti & Hidayat, 2022). Furthermore, this approach aligns with the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which positions local culture as one of the foundations for achieving inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development.

In the context of a multicultural society, Banks (2008) explains that civic education needs to develop citizens' ability to preserve their local cultural identity while also participating as part of the global community. Civics education does not aim to erase cultural identity but rather to strike a balance between appreciation for local culture and respect for universal values such as justice, human rights, democracy, and peace. This perspective demonstrates that local cultural values hold great potential to support the development of Global Citizenship Education.

One form of local wisdom that continues to thrive in Indonesia is the Sapta Darma belief system. As a belief in the One Supreme God, Sapta Darma teaches seven virtues, the essence of which includes: 1) Piety toward the One Supreme God. 2) Honesty and obedience to the laws of the state. 3) Love for the homeland. 4) Social concern rooted in compassion. 5) Independence in pursuing one's spirituality. 6)

The practice of noble moral conduct in community life. 7) Awareness of the impermanence of worldly life. These values not only serve as spiritual guidelines but also shape the social behavior of its followers in community life. From the perspective of Civic Education, these values align with the dimensions of civic attitudes, such as tolerance, social responsibility, civic participation, respect for the law, and social solidarity.

This study was conducted in Genting Village, Jambu Subdistrict, Semarang Regency, where community life continues to be guided by the values of Sapta Darma. Based on initial observations, these values are not only manifested in spiritual activities but are also integrated into various community social activities, such as mutual aid, deliberation, and harmony-building activities facilitated through the Interfaith Harmony Association (PKUB). These practices demonstrate that the values of Sapta Darma extend beyond mere religious teachings; rather, they form part of community-based character education that fosters harmonious social relationships amidst diversity.

From the perspective of Civic Education, the success of learning is measured not only by mastery of civic knowledge and civic skills, but also by the development of civic disposition a civic character that reflects responsibility, concern for the public interest, respect for diversity, tolerance, and a commitment to democratic values (Branson, 1998). Therefore, strengthening civic disposition is a key objective in civic education, as this character serves as the foundation for responsible citizen participation in democratic life. In line with this view, Print (2015) explains that effective civic education is not only focused on classroom learning but must also provide students with real-world experiences of participating in community life. Through these experiences, citizens learn to develop a sense of social responsibility, concern for others, and the skills needed to participate in democratic life.

On the other hand, research on community-based character education has largely focused on school environments or the general community, while studies linking local belief systems to the formation of civic character have been scarce. This situation indicates a research gap regarding how local values and beliefs can be integrated into civic education to shape citizens who are capable of preserving their cultural identity while also possessing a global perspective.

Nevertheless, a review of the literature indicates that research on Sapta Darma has thus far been dominated by studies focusing on historical, spiritual, ritual, and cultural identity aspects. Meanwhile, studies analyzing Sapta Darma as a source of values in civic education particularly from the perspectives of Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development remain very limited. Research on community-based character education also generally focuses more on implementation within school settings, whereas studies that position local faith communities as spaces for the formation of civic dispositions remain relatively few. Thus, there remains a research gap regarding how the virtues of local belief systems can be integrated into citizenship education to build citizens capable of preserving local cultural identities while also embodying the orientation of global citizens who support sustainable development (Novitasari et al, 2025).

Based on this gap, this study aims to explore the integration of Sapta Darma values into community-based character education in Genting Village and to analyze their contribution to strengthening civic character that supports Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to link Indonesian local belief values with the concept of global citizenship through a community case study approach. The research findings are expected to contribute to the development of a more contextual, locally culture-based, and relevant Citizenship Education that addresses the challenges of a sustainable global society.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using an ethnographic research design to explore the integration of the seven virtuous values of Sapta Darma into community-based character education and its implications for strengthening civic disposition in the context of Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development. An ethnographic approach was selected because it enables researchers to understand how cultural values are practiced, interpreted, and transmitted within the daily lives of community members through prolonged engagement in their natural setting, rather than merely describing observable behaviors (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted in Genting Village, Jambu District, Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The village was purposively selected because it is one of the communities where the Sapta Darma belief system continues to be actively practiced and transmitted across generations through religious, cultural, and social activities, making it an appropriate setting for examining the integration of local wisdom into community-based character education.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experience, and active involvement in the implementation of Sapta Darma values within the community. The participants consisted of Sapta Darma adherents, village officials, and local community members who were directly involved in community activities related to character education and social interaction.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Employing multiple data collection techniques facilitated methodological triangulation and provided a comprehensive understanding of both observed community practices and participants' perspectives regarding the implementation of Sapta Darma values. Participant observation was conducted to examine how the seven virtuous values of Sapta Darma were practiced and internalized in everyday community life. Semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 45–90

minutes, were conducted to explore participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the internalization of moral values and their contribution to civic disposition. All interviews were conducted with participants' informed consent and were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. Documentary evidence, including community archives, activity reports, photographs, village documents, and documents related to Sapta Darma teachings, was used to complement and verify the primary data.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process to identify recurring themes concerning the integration of Sapta Darma values, community-based character education, civic disposition, and their relevance to Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed source triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants and multiple data collection techniques, while member checking was carried out by confirming interview interpretations with participants to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the findings. Furthermore, prolonged engagement in the research setting enabled the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the community's cultural practices and social interactions, thereby strengthening the credibility of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their identities were anonymized to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process.

Result and Discussion

3.1 Integration of the Sapta Darma Values into Community-Based Character Education

Research findings indicate that community-based character education in Genting Village takes place through the process of internalizing the seven Sapta Darma values, which are not formally taught but are practiced in the daily lives of the community. These values include respect for human dignity, honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, living in harmony, mutual respect, and social concern. This internalization process occurs through the behavioral examples set by community elders, routine practices in social activities, and community involvement in various collective activities such as mutual aid, village deliberations, religious activities, and community service projects.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the community does not view the Sapta Darma values merely as spiritual teachings, but as ethical guidelines for interacting with fellow citizens. As Mr. Surandi explained *"The teachings we believe in also serve as a guide for how we treat one another."* (Interview, 27 December, 2025). These values are embodied in a spirit of mutual assistance, regardless of religion or social background. Thus, character education takes place naturally through the ongoing social experiences of community members.

These findings reinforce the view of Arthur et al. (2017) that character education is more effective when moral values are learned through real-life practice rather than simply through the delivery of classroom material. Similarly, Susanti and Hidayat (2022) explain that society serves as a learning space where character internalization occurs contextually through social interaction and modeling. Therefore, the integration of the Sapta Darma values demonstrates that local communities possess the capacity to act as agents of sustainable character education.

Furthermore, this process aligns with the concept of community-based education proposed by Galbraith, in which the community serves as both the subject and the provider of education through the active participation of all its members. In the context of Genting Village, the Sapta Darma values have become a shared

culture passed down across generations, ensuring that the character education process continues seamlessly.

3.2 The Contribution of the Sapta Darma Values to the Formation of Civic Disposition

The research results show that the internalization of Sapta Darma values contributes to the formation of civic disposition in the community. This is evident in the development of attitudes of tolerance, social responsibility, concern for the common good, respect for diversity, and active participation in various community activities. This is also consistent with what was conveyed by Mr. Surandi, the head of Plimbungan hamlet in Genting Village, who is also a follower of the Sapta Darma faith. who stated, *"...despite the many differences, the people here always live in harmony and prioritize tolerance; they also actively participate in activities held in the hamlet and the village."* (Interview, December 27, 2025).

Tolerance is evident in the harmonious relationships between Sapta Darma adherents and members of the community who hold different religions and beliefs. The community actively participates in social activities without questioning religious identity, while deliberation serves as the primary mechanism for resolving various shared issues. Mutual cooperation, concern for neighbors, and involvement in village activities demonstrate the development of social responsibility, which is one of the key indicators of civic disposition.

These findings are consistent with Branson's (1998) theory, which states that civic disposition encompasses habits of thinking and acting that support democratic life, such as tolerance, responsibility, social concern, and respect for the public interest. These values cannot be formed solely through the transfer of knowledge but require ongoing social experiences.

The research findings also reinforce Print's (2015) view that civic education is more effective when participants directly experience civic practices in community life. In the context of Genting Village, community members learn to become responsible citizens through real-life

social experiences, allowing civic disposition to develop naturally as part of the community's culture. In line with

Thus, the values of Sapta Darma not only shape individual character but also strengthen social cohesion, which serves as the foundation of democratic life at the community level.

3.3 The Relevance of the Sapta Darma Values to Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development

The research findings indicate that the Sapta Darma values are strongly relevant to the principles of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The values of respect for human dignity, living in harmony, social responsibility, care for others, and respect for diversity reflect universal values that are the primary objectives of global citizenship education.

Although rooted in local belief systems, these values are not exclusive; on the contrary, they encourage communities to build inclusive relationships with all citizens. This demonstrates that local cultural identity does not conflict with the values of global citizenship but can, in fact, serve as a foundation for fostering citizens with a global awareness without losing their cultural identity. *"In Genting Village, all community members, including those who adhere to Sapta Darma, actively participate in village affairs. They take part in community deliberations, cooperate with one another, help neighbors in need, and maintain harmonious relationships without discriminating based on religion or belief. These values have become an integral part of our community's culture."* Stated by Village Officials (Interview, December 27, 2025).

These findings are consistent with UNESCO (2015), which asserts that Global Citizenship Education (GCED) aims to develop individuals who possess the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to appreciate diversity, uphold social justice, and actively participate in creating a peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable society. In the context of this study, the virtues of Sapta Darma such as respect for human

dignity, living in harmony, social responsibility, care for others, and tolerance not only shape individual character but also foster the creation of inclusive social relationships within a diverse society. This demonstrates that the local values alive within communities align with the universal values that form the foundation for the development of global citizenship, allowing local cultural identity to coexist with a strengthened sense of being global citizens.

In addition to supporting the implementation of Global Citizenship Education, the integration of the Sapta Darma values also contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These values support Goal 4 (Quality Education) by strengthening community-based character education that instills the values of responsibility, tolerance, and respect for diversity as part of lifelong learning. On the other hand, the practices of mutual cooperation, deliberation, social solidarity, and harmonious coexistence among followers of different religions and beliefs reflect the implementation of Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which emphasizes the importance of creating a peaceful, inclusive society with strong social participation. Thus, this study demonstrates that local wisdom serves not only as a cultural heritage but also plays a strategic role as social capital in supporting sustainable development through the strengthening of a democratic, inclusive, and responsible civic character.

The findings of this study offer a new perspective: that local wisdom is not merely a cultural heritage, but a relevant source of civic education for addressing global challenges. The integration of the Sapta Darma values demonstrates that civic education can be developed through an approach that values local cultural identity while fostering the competencies of global citizens who are democratic, inclusive, and committed to sustainable development.

Conclusion

This study shows that the integration of the seven Sapta Darma virtues into community-

based character education in Genting Village contributes to strengthening the community's civic disposition by fostering attitudes of tolerance, social responsibility, care for others, respect for diversity, and active participation in community life. The internalization of these values does not occur through formal learning, but rather through role modeling, habit formation, and community involvement in various social activities that make these values a way of life within the community.

The research findings also indicate that the values of Sapta Darma are relevant to the principles of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The values of respect for human dignity, harmonious living, social solidarity, and shared responsibility reflect universal values that support the development of citizens capable of preserving their local cultural identity while maintaining an awareness of their role as global citizens. Thus, this study affirms that local wisdom serves not only as a cultural heritage but can also be a source of contextual and relevant citizenship education in addressing global challenges.

Theoretically, this study expands the field of Citizenship Education by demonstrating the interrelationship between local belief systems, community-based character education, the formation of civic dispositions, and the development of Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development. Practically, these findings provide recommendations for educators, policymakers, and the community to integrate the values of local wisdom into civic education programs as a strategy for strengthening the character of citizens in an inclusive, democratic, and sustainable manner. Further research is recommended to examine the implementation of this model in other local belief communities or within the context of formal education, thereby yielding a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of local wisdom to the development of global citizenship.

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