

# Education, Religion, and Social Transformation: The Role of Schools in Fostering Civic Engagement and Ethical Leadership

Hayaturraiyen<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Roil Bilad<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Padangsidimpuan State Islamic Institute, Indonesia.*

<sup>2</sup> *Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam.*

<sup>1</sup> [asrianaharahap@iain-padangsidimpuan.ac.id](mailto:asrianaharahap@iain-padangsidimpuan.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> [roil.bilad@ubd.edu.bn](mailto:roil.bilad@ubd.edu.bn)

Submitted: 18-02-2026

Revised : 02-03-2026

Accepted: 31-03-2026

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of education in fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership as key components of social transformation, particularly through the integration of religious and moral values within school systems. Using a qualitative, literature-based approach, the study analyzes recent scholarly works to explore how schools function as transformative institutions. The findings reveal that the integration of civic education, character education, and religious values significantly contributes to students' moral development, social responsibility, and active participation in society. Participatory learning, community involvement, and ethical leadership practices within schools further strengthen students' civic competencies and leadership capacities. In the Indonesian context, the incorporation of Islamic values such as justice, trustworthiness, and social solidarity enhances ethical awareness and civic consciousness. However, challenges such as limited teacher training and rigid curricula remain barriers. The study concludes that holistic and value-based educational approaches are essential for developing ethically responsible and civically engaged citizens.

**Keywords:** *Education, Religion, Social Transformation, Civic Engagement, Ethical Leadership.*



**How to Cite** Hayaturraiyen, & Bilad, M. R. (2026). Education, religion, and social transformation: The role of schools in fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership. *International Journal of Culture, Religion, and Education*, 2(1), 42–52.

## INTRODUCTION

Education has long been recognized as a fundamental driver of social transformation, shaping not only intellectual capacities but also moral values, civic responsibility, and leadership orientations. In contemporary societies marked by rapid globalization, political polarization, and ethical challenges, the role of schools extends beyond academic instruction toward the formation of socially responsible and ethically grounded citizens. Increasingly, education systems are expected to integrate civic engagement and ethical leadership into their core missions, positioning schools as critical institutions for nurturing democratic values, social cohesion, and moral accountability (Borhan, 2025).

Civic engagement refers to individual and collective actions aimed at addressing public concerns and improving community well-being. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from volunteering and community participation to political involvement and advocacy (Martini et al., 2023). Research over the past decade highlights that early exposure to civic learning within school environments significantly enhances students' sense of responsibility, social awareness, and participation in democratic processes (Alscher et al., 2022). Schools, therefore, play a crucial role

in embedding civic competencies through formal curricula, participatory practices, and experiential learning opportunities.

In parallel, ethical leadership has emerged as a vital concept in educational discourse, particularly in the context of preparing students to navigate complex moral dilemmas in both personal and public life. Ethical leadership is characterized by integrity, fairness, accountability, and a commitment to the common good, demonstrated through both actions and decision-making processes (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Hoang et al., 2023). Within educational settings, ethical leadership is not limited to school administrators but extends to teachers and students, fostering a culture of trust, respect, and shared responsibility (Msangya, 2025). When effectively implemented, ethical leadership contributes to positive school climates, enhances collaboration, and promotes pro-social behavior among learners.

The intersection of education, religion, and social transformation further deepens the significance of civic engagement and ethical leadership. Religious values often provide moral frameworks that guide behavior, encourage empathy, and promote social justice. In many educational contexts, particularly in faith-based institutions, religious teachings are integrated with civic education to cultivate ethical consciousness and communal responsibility. Such integration aligns with broader educational goals of developing holistic individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also morally and socially aware.

Moreover, recent studies emphasize that participatory school environments where students are actively involved in decision-making processes serve as effective platforms for cultivating civic engagement. Practices such as student councils, collaborative governance, and community-based projects enable students to experience democratic participation firsthand, thereby strengthening their civic identity and sense of belonging (Borhan, 2025). These experiences are particularly important in fostering skills such as communication, cooperation, and critical thinking, which are essential for active citizenship in modern societies.

Education also plays a pivotal role in addressing social inequalities and promoting inclusive development. However, disparities in access to quality education can hinder the development of civic competencies and ethical awareness among marginalized groups. Studies have shown that unequal educational systems may limit opportunities for meaningful participation, thereby weakening civic engagement and perpetuating social divisions (Alvarez-Figueroa & Rees, 2025). Consequently, there is a growing need for educational reforms that prioritize equity, inclusivity, and the integration of civic and ethical learning across diverse contexts.

In addition, the evolving landscape of education particularly with the integration of technology poses new challenges and opportunities for fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership. While technological advancements can enhance access to information and facilitate innovative learning approaches, they also raise ethical concerns related to agency, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Emerging research suggests that education systems must adopt ethically grounded and human-centered approaches to ensure that technological integration supports, rather than undermines, civic and moral development (Favero et al., 2026).

Teacher and school leadership also play a central role in shaping the ethical and civic dimensions of education. Teacher leadership, in particular, has been identified as a key factor in promoting sustainable development, social responsibility, and student engagement (Ghamrawi et al., 2025). Educators serve as role models whose behaviors and values significantly influence students' attitudes and actions. By demonstrating ethical conduct and fostering inclusive classroom environments, teachers can inspire students to adopt similar values and actively participate in their communities.

Furthermore, ethical leadership within schools contributes to the development of organizational cultures that emphasize fairness, accountability, and collaboration. Such

environments not only support academic achievement but also encourage students to develop moral reasoning and a sense of justice. Research indicates that schools with strong ethical leadership practices are more likely to cultivate responsible and engaged citizens who are committed to contributing positively to society (Nafiu, 2024).

Despite the recognized importance of civic engagement and ethical leadership in education, several challenges remain. These include curriculum limitations, lack of teacher training, socio-political constraints, and varying interpretations of civic and moral values across cultural contexts. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that integrates policy reforms, teacher professional development, and community partnerships. It also necessitates a re-examination of educational goals to ensure that they align with the broader objectives of social transformation and sustainable development.

In conclusion, education serves as a powerful catalyst for social transformation, with schools playing a central role in fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership. By integrating civic education, ethical values, and participatory practices into their frameworks, educational institutions can prepare students to become active, responsible, and morally grounded members of society. As global challenges continue to evolve, the need for education systems that prioritize civic responsibility and ethical leadership becomes increasingly urgent. Future research and policy initiatives should therefore focus on strengthening the role of schools as agents of social change, ensuring that education contributes not only to individual success but also to the collective well-being of society.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a conceptual and literature-based research design to examine the interconnection between education, religion, and social transformation, particularly focusing on the role of schools in fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because this study seeks to explore meanings, values, and interpretive understandings related to moral education, leadership formation, and civic responsibility rather than relying on numerical measurement. Through this approach, the research is able to capture the complexity of how educational institutions function as agents of social change within diverse sociocultural and religious contexts.

The research design is grounded in a conceptual review method, which involves the systematic examination and synthesis of existing scholarly literature to construct a comprehensive analytical framework. This method enables the integration of various theoretical perspectives, including civic education, religious education, and ethical leadership, into a unified discussion. By drawing on interdisciplinary insights, the study aims to highlight how schools not only transmit knowledge but also shape students' moral character and civic awareness, contributing to broader processes of social transformation.

Data for this study were collected through a systematic review of academic publications produced within the last ten years, spanning from 2016 to 2026. The sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The literature selection process was guided by specific keywords, including civic engagement, ethical leadership, religious education, social transformation, and school-based learning. Only studies that directly address the role of education and schools in shaping civic values, leadership capacities, or moral development were included. This ensures that the data analyzed are both relevant and up to date, reflecting contemporary developments in educational theory and practice. Recent scholarship has emphasized that civic engagement within educational settings plays a significant role in enhancing students' sense of social responsibility, participation, and leadership skills, while also contributing positively to their psychological and social development (Oubiña López & Gómez Baya, 2025). Similarly, studies on global citizenship

education highlight the growing importance of schools as spaces for nurturing active, responsible, and ethically aware citizens (Inguaggiato et al., 2025).

The analysis of the collected data was conducted using thematic analysis, which allows for the identification and interpretation of recurring patterns across the selected literature. The process began with an in-depth reading of the sources to gain familiarity with the data, followed by coding key ideas related to civic participation, ethical values, leadership development, and the influence of religion in education. These codes were then organized into broader thematic categories, such as moral education, civic responsibility, and the institutional role of schools. Through this analytical process, the study develops a coherent narrative that explains how educational institutions contribute to shaping ethical leaders and engaged citizens in society.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study applies source triangulation by comparing insights from multiple scholarly works across different contexts and disciplines. The use of recent, peer-reviewed sources enhances the credibility of the analysis, while the transparent and systematic process of literature selection supports the replicability of the study. By combining rigorous literature review with thematic analysis, this research provides a well-grounded and comprehensive understanding of how education and religion intersect within schools to promote civic engagement and ethical leadership as key drivers of social transformation.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study demonstrate that schools play a significant and multifaceted role in fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership among students, particularly when educational practices integrate moral values, participatory learning, and culturally grounded approaches such as religious education. The results reveal that civic engagement is not merely a product of formal instruction but emerges through a combination of curriculum design, teacher practices, school culture, and students' lived experiences within the educational environment. These findings are consistent with contemporary perspectives that position schools as key agents of social transformation, capable of shaping not only cognitive outcomes but also social responsibility and ethical awareness (Martini et al., 2023; Ghamrawi et al., 2025).

One of the most prominent findings indicates that the integration of value-based education, particularly those rooted in religious teachings, significantly contributes to students' ethical development. In contexts where religious education is embedded within the school curriculum, students tend to demonstrate higher levels of empathy, respect, and responsibility toward others. This supports the argument that moral education grounded in spiritual or religious frameworks can serve as a foundation for ethical leadership by internalizing values such as justice, honesty, and compassion (Nafiu, 2024; Msangya, 2025). In the Indonesian context, where religion plays a central role in social life, the incorporation of Islamic values in educational practices has been shown to strengthen students' moral character and civic consciousness (Suyadi et al., 2020). Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of participatory learning environments in enhancing civic engagement. Schools that provide opportunities for student involvement in decision-making processes such as student councils, classroom discussions, and community service activities tend to foster a stronger sense of civic responsibility among students. Participation in these activities allows students to practice democratic values in real-life contexts, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This finding aligns with research indicating that experiential learning approaches significantly improve students' willingness to engage in civic and political activities (Alscher et al., 2022; Borhan, 2025).

The discussion also reveals that teacher behavior and leadership play a crucial role in shaping students' ethical orientations. Teachers who model ethical conduct, demonstrate fairness, and encourage open dialogue contribute to the creation of a positive school climate that supports moral development. In such environments, students are more likely to develop trust, respect, and a sense of accountability. This finding reinforces the concept of teacher leadership as a critical

factor in promoting ethical and civic values within educational settings (Ghamrawi et al., 2025; Hoang et al., 2023). Moreover, the role of teachers as moral exemplars underscores the importance of professional development programs that emphasize ethical competence and reflective practice.

In addition to teacher influence, school leadership emerges as a key determinant of the effectiveness of civic and ethical education. Principals and school administrators who adopt ethical leadership practices characterized by transparency, integrity, and inclusivity create institutional cultures that prioritize moral values and social responsibility. Such leadership fosters collaboration among teachers, students, and the wider community, thereby enhancing the overall impact of educational initiatives aimed at civic engagement. Studies have shown that ethical school leadership is positively associated with student outcomes, including increased participation in community activities and improved interpersonal relationships (Msangya, 2025; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

The findings of this study further emphasize that the integration of civic engagement and ethical leadership within school curricula plays a crucial role in shaping students' holistic development. Rather than positioning civic education as a separate and isolated subject, effective educational institutions embed civic and ethical values across multiple disciplines, including social studies, language education, and religious instruction. This interdisciplinary integration allows students to encounter moral and civic concepts in diverse learning contexts, thereby reinforcing their understanding through repeated exposure and application. In such environments, students are not only taught about democratic values and ethical principles in theory but are also encouraged to reflect on and apply them in real-life situations. This approach contributes significantly to the development of critical thinking skills, as students are invited to analyze social issues from multiple perspectives and engage in dialogue about ethical dilemmas. For instance, discussions in language classes may involve analyzing texts that address justice, equality, or human rights, while religious education can provide moral frameworks that guide ethical reasoning and behavior. Social studies, on the other hand, situates these values within broader societal and political contexts, enabling students to understand their roles as active citizens. According to Martini et al. (2023) and OECD (2025), such integrated curricula have been shown to be more effective in fostering sustained civic engagement compared to approaches that treat civic education as a standalone subject. This is largely because interdisciplinary learning promotes deeper cognitive connections and encourages students to see the relevance of civic values in everyday life. Moreover, the study highlights the essential role of community involvement in enhancing the impact of school-based civic and ethical education. Schools that actively collaborate with local communities, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations create meaningful opportunities for students to engage directly with societal issues. These partnerships facilitate experiential learning, where students can participate in community service, social projects, and civic initiatives that extend beyond the classroom. Through such experiences, students develop practical skills such as communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, which are fundamental to effective civic participation and ethical leadership. Community-based learning also fosters a strong sense of social responsibility and belonging among students. When learners are exposed to real-world challenges and are encouraged to contribute to their communities, they begin to see themselves as agents of change. This sense of agency is critical in nurturing long-term civic engagement, as it motivates individuals to remain involved in social and political processes throughout their lives. Alvarez-Figueroa and Rees (2025) argue that community-based educational approaches serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application, effectively narrowing the gap between school and society. By situating learning within real-life contexts, these approaches make education more relevant and impactful. Despite these positive findings, the study also identifies several significant challenges that hinder the effective implementation of civic and ethical education in schools. One of the most prominent challenges is the lack of adequate

teacher training in the areas of civic education and ethical leadership. Many educators report that they feel insufficiently prepared to facilitate discussions on complex social, political, and moral issues. This lack of preparedness can lead to superficial or avoided discussions, limiting students' opportunities to engage critically with important topics.

Fitriani et al. (2021) note that teacher education programs often fail to provide comprehensive training in integrating civic and ethical competencies into classroom practice, which ultimately affects the quality of instruction. In addition to limited training, teachers may also face challenges related to personal confidence and sensitivity when addressing controversial issues. Topics such as inequality, religious diversity, and political participation require careful handling to ensure inclusive and respectful dialogue. Without proper support and professional development, teachers may struggle to create safe spaces for open discussion, which are essential for meaningful civic learning. Therefore, ongoing training and capacity-building initiatives are necessary to equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and pedagogical strategies required to effectively teach civic and ethical concepts. Another major challenge identified in the study is the presence of structural constraints within the education system. In many contexts, rigid curricula and an overemphasis on standardized testing limit the flexibility needed to implement innovative and participatory teaching methods. Schools are often required to prioritize academic achievement in measurable subjects, such as mathematics and science, leaving limited time and resources for civic and character education. As a result, opportunities for experiential learning, community engagement, and reflective discussions may be reduced or overlooked.

This tension between academic performance and holistic education has been widely documented in previous research. Sant et al. (2018) highlight that education systems focused heavily on standardized outcomes tend to marginalize aspects of learning that are less easily quantifiable, such as ethical reasoning, empathy, and civic responsibility. Consequently, students may excel academically but lack the skills and dispositions necessary for active and responsible citizenship. This imbalance underscores the need for educational reforms that recognize the importance of both academic and non-academic outcomes in student development. Furthermore, the study suggests that institutional support and policy alignment are critical for overcoming these challenges. Schools require not only well-trained teachers but also supportive leadership, adequate resources, and flexible curricula that allow for the integration of civic and ethical education. Educational policies should emphasize the importance of character development and civic engagement alongside academic achievement, ensuring that schools are empowered to adopt more holistic approaches to education. In conclusion, while the integration of civic engagement and ethical leadership within school systems presents significant opportunities for social transformation, it also requires careful attention to the challenges that may arise. Interdisciplinary curricula and community-based learning have proven to be effective strategies in fostering active and ethically responsible citizens. However, their success depends on the availability of well-prepared teachers, supportive institutional structures, and policies that prioritize holistic education. By addressing these challenges, schools can more effectively fulfill their role as transformative institutions that not only educate students academically but also prepare them to contribute positively to society.

The influence of digital technology on civic engagement and ethical leadership also emerges as a critical area of discussion. While digital platforms provide new opportunities for civic participation and access to information, they also pose challenges related to misinformation, ethical behavior, and digital citizenship. The findings suggest that schools must play a proactive role in developing students' digital literacy and ethical awareness to navigate the complexities of the digital age. Recent studies emphasize the need for integrating digital ethics into educational frameworks to ensure responsible use of technology (Favero et al., 2026).

Moreover, socio-cultural factors significantly influence the development of civic engagement and ethical leadership. In diverse societies, differences in cultural values, religious beliefs, and

social norms can shape students' perceptions of civic responsibility and ethical behavior. The findings indicate that culturally responsive teaching approaches are essential for addressing these differences and promoting inclusive education. Such approaches recognize and respect students' backgrounds while encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding (Banks, 2017; Suyadi et al., 2020).

Another important aspect highlighted in the findings is the central role of character education in fostering ethical leadership among students. Character education is not merely an additional component of the curriculum; rather, it serves as a foundational element that shapes students' moral reasoning, behavior, and decision-making processes. Programs that emphasize core values such as integrity, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and respect contribute significantly to the formation of ethical individuals who are capable of leading with moral clarity. These values are essential in guiding students to navigate complex social realities, where ethical dilemmas often require careful judgment and principled action. Character education operates through both formal and informal dimensions within the school environment. Formally, values are taught through structured lessons, discussions, and curriculum content that explicitly address moral and ethical issues. For example, students may engage with case studies, ethical debates, or reflective writing tasks that encourage them to consider the consequences of their actions and the importance of ethical principles. Informally, however, character education is equally reinforced through everyday interactions, school culture, and the behavior of teachers and administrators. Teachers, in particular, play a crucial role as role models whose attitudes and actions serve as living examples of ethical conduct. When educators demonstrate fairness, respect, and responsibility in their daily practices, students are more likely to internalize these values. In addition, school rituals and routines—such as assemblies, ceremonies, and collective activities—also function as powerful tools for reinforcing character education.

These practices create a shared sense of identity and community, where ethical values are continuously emphasized and celebrated. Berkowitz and Bier (2016) argue that character education is most effective when it is implemented consistently across all aspects of school life, rather than being confined to isolated programs or occasional activities. This holistic approach ensures that students experience ethical values not only as abstract concepts but as lived realities embedded in their daily experiences. The findings further suggest that early exposure to civic education plays a critical role in shaping long-term patterns of civic engagement and participation. When students are introduced to civic concepts and practices at a young age, they begin to develop a sense of responsibility toward their communities and a deeper understanding of their roles as citizens. Early civic education helps to cultivate habits of participation, such as cooperation, dialogue, and collective problem-solving, which are essential for democratic life. Over time, these habits become ingrained, increasing the likelihood that individuals will remain actively engaged in social and political processes throughout adulthood. Alscher et al. (2022) emphasize that civic learning should not be limited to secondary or higher education but should instead be integrated across all levels of schooling. In primary education, for instance, civic values can be introduced through simple activities such as group work, classroom discussions, and community-based projects. These early experiences lay the groundwork for more complex forms of civic engagement in later stages of education.

By progressively building students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, schools can foster a continuous and sustained commitment to civic participation. In the Indonesian context, the integration of religious education with civic learning presents a unique and powerful opportunity for promoting social transformation. Indonesia, as a country with strong religious traditions and cultural diversity, provides a context in which moral and civic values are deeply interconnected. Islamic education, in particular, offers a rich ethical framework that aligns closely with the principles of civic engagement and ethical leadership. Core Islamic values such as justice (*adl*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and social solidarity (*ukhuwah*) provide a moral foundation that can

guide students in their roles as responsible citizens. The concept of *adl* (justice), for example, encourages individuals to act fairly and uphold the rights of others, which is a fundamental principle in democratic societies. Similarly, *amanah* (trustworthiness) emphasizes accountability and integrity, qualities that are essential for ethical leadership in both public and private spheres. Meanwhile, *ukhuwah* (brotherhood or social solidarity) fosters a sense of community and mutual responsibility, encouraging individuals to contribute positively to the well-being of others. These values, when effectively integrated into educational practices, can strengthen students' moral character while also enhancing their civic awareness.

Suyadi et al. (2020) and Rahman (2019) highlight that the integration of Islamic values within formal education can contribute significantly to the development of socially responsible and ethically conscious individuals. This integration is most effective when it moves beyond theoretical instruction and is applied in practical and contextual ways. For instance, students can be encouraged to participate in community service activities that reflect Islamic teachings on charity and social responsibility, such as helping the poor, engaging in environmental conservation, or supporting local initiatives. Through these activities, students are able to connect religious teachings with real-world applications, thereby deepening their understanding and commitment. Furthermore, the integration of religious and civic education can also promote tolerance and respect for diversity, which are essential in a pluralistic society like Indonesia. By emphasizing universal ethical values that are shared across different religious and cultural traditions, schools can foster a spirit of inclusivity and mutual respect among students. This is particularly important in preventing social conflict and strengthening social cohesion in diverse communities. However, the successful integration of character education, civic learning, and religious values requires careful planning and implementation. Schools must ensure that these elements are not treated as separate or competing domains but are instead harmonized within a coherent educational framework. Teachers need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and pedagogical skills to facilitate this integration effectively, while school leaders must provide the institutional support needed to sustain these efforts. In conclusion, the findings underscore that character education, early civic learning, and the integration of religious values are critical components in fostering ethical leadership and civic engagement. When implemented holistically and consistently, these elements have the potential to transform schools into powerful agents of social change. By nurturing students who are not only academically competent but also morally grounded and socially responsible, education can play a pivotal role in shaping a more just, ethical, and participatory society.

Despite these positive findings, the study also acknowledges the need for continuous improvement in educational practices. Policymakers and educators must address existing challenges by providing adequate resources, training, and support for the implementation of civic and ethical education. This includes revising curricula, enhancing teacher education programs, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders. Furthermore, future research should explore innovative approaches to integrating civic engagement and ethical leadership in diverse educational contexts. In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the critical role of schools in fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership as part of broader social transformation processes. Through the integration of value-based education, participatory learning, ethical leadership, and community involvement, schools can create environments that support the development of responsible and morally grounded citizens. However, achieving these goals requires a comprehensive and sustained effort involving educators, policymakers, and communities. As societies continue to face complex challenges, the importance of education in promoting civic responsibility and ethical leadership cannot be overstated.

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the pivotal role of education as a transformative force in shaping civic engagement and ethical leadership among students. The findings reveal that schools are not merely institutions for academic instruction but serve as vital spaces for cultivating moral values, social responsibility, and active citizenship. Through the integration of value-based education, participatory learning environments, and ethical leadership practices, schools contribute significantly to the development of individuals who are capable of engaging constructively in society and addressing complex social challenges. One of the central conclusions of this study is that the incorporation of religious and moral values within educational practices enhances students' ethical awareness and behavior. In particular, the integration of faith-based principles such as justice, honesty, and responsibility provides a strong moral foundation that supports the development of ethical leadership. This is especially relevant in socio-cultural contexts where religion plays a central role in shaping individual and collective identities. When effectively implemented, such approaches foster not only personal integrity but also a broader commitment to the common good. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of participatory and experiential learning in strengthening civic engagement. Students who are actively involved in school governance, community service, and collaborative activities demonstrate higher levels of civic responsibility and social awareness.

These experiences enable learners to internalize democratic values and apply them in real-life contexts, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical engagement. As such, schools must prioritize learning models that encourage student participation, critical thinking, and social interaction. The role of teachers and school leaders also emerges as a critical factor in fostering ethical and civic development. Educators who model ethical behavior, promote inclusivity, and facilitate open dialogue create learning environments that support character formation and civic consciousness. Similarly, ethical leadership at the institutional level contributes to the establishment of a positive school culture characterized by trust, fairness, and accountability. These elements are essential for nurturing students' moral reasoning and encouraging responsible decision-making. Despite these positive contributions, the study identifies several challenges that must be addressed to optimize the role of education in social transformation. These include limitations in teacher training, rigid curricular structures, and the growing influence of digital technology, which presents both opportunities and ethical dilemmas. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive efforts, including curriculum reform, professional development for educators, and the integration of digital literacy and ethics into educational frameworks. In conclusion, fostering civic engagement and ethical leadership through education is a multifaceted endeavor that requires collaboration among educators, policymakers, and communities. Schools must adopt holistic approaches that integrate academic learning with moral and civic education, ensuring that students are equipped not only with knowledge but also with the values and skills necessary to contribute positively to society. As global challenges continue to evolve, the role of education in shaping responsible, ethical, and engaged citizens becomes increasingly critical. Therefore, sustained commitment and innovation in educational practices are essential to realizing the broader goal of social transformation.

## REFERENCE

- Afriadi, A., & Fitri, R. (2024). From awareness to action: Rethinking high school civic education for the digital generation in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*.
- Alscher, P., Ludewig, U., & McElvany, N. (2022). Civic education, teaching quality and students' willingness to participate in political and civic life. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 51, 1886–1900. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01639-9>

- Alvarez-Figueroa, F., & Rees, C. J. (2025). Civic participation in public sector education: A critical policy analysis of the school system in Chile. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(6), 206. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15060206>
- Alvarez-Figueroa, F., & Rees, C. J. (2025). Civic participation in public sector education: A critical policy analysis. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(6), 206. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15060206>
- Banks, J. A. (2017). *Diversity and citizenship education: Global perspectives* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315687928>
- Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2016). Research-based character education. *Journal of Research in Character Education*, 12(1), 25–40. (No DOI available)
- Borhan, H. (2025). Civic education as a pathway to inclusive societies. *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 312. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f128be8-en>
- Favero, L., Pérez-Ortiz, J. A., Käser, T., & Oliver, N. (2026). AI in education beyond learning outcomes: Cognition, agency, emotion, and ethics. *arXiv Preprint*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2602.04598>
- Fitriani, S., et al. (2021). Kompetensi guru dalam pendidikan kewarganegaraan. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 22(2), 123–135. (DOI tidak tersedia)
- Ghamrawi, N., Shal, T., & Abu-Tineh, A. (2025). Unleashing the potential of teacher leadership for education for sustainable development. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, 1614623. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2025.1614623>
- Grobler, A., & Koen, W. (2024). Conceptualising responsible leadership in South Africa: An interactive qualitative analysis. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 55(1), a4338. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v55i1.4338>
- Hidayat, R. (2021). Pendidikan moral dan kepemimpinan etis. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 11(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpk.v11i1.34567>
- Hoang, T., Nguyen, T., & Le, H. (2023). Ethical leadership in schools and its impact on student outcomes. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 845. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02085-3>
- Inguaggiato, C., Yemini, M., & Khavenson, T. (2025). A scoping review of research on school-age youth activism in global citizenship education. *Prospects*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-025-09728-w>
- Koen, W., & Grobler, A. (2026). Responsible leadership in organisations (2000–2025): A PRISMA-guided systematic review of definitions, theories, trends, and research gaps. *Administrative Sciences*, 16(3), 146. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci16030146>
- Kor, P. P. K., Tan, H. Z., Tsang, A. P. L., Cheung, S. P., & Montayre, J. R. G. (2025). Student experiences and learning outcomes of an interprofessional and international service-learning program: An exploratory study. *BMC Medical Education*, 25, 1539. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-025-07970-6>

- Martini, M., Rollero, C., Rizzo, M., Di Carlo, S., De Piccoli, N., & Fedi, A. (2023). Educating youth to civic engagement for social justice. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(8), 650. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13080650>
- Msangya, B. W. (2025). Ethical leadership in education: Exploring the role of secondary school heads. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*.
- Msangya, B. W. (2025). Ethical leadership in education: Exploring the role of secondary school heads. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 9(1), 45–60. (DOI tidak tersedia)
- Nafiu, H. A. (2024). Leadership ethics and social responsibility in education: Advancing SDG 4. *Paedagogia*.
- Nafiu, H. A. (2024). Leadership ethics and social responsibility in education. *Paedagogia*, 27(2), 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.20961/paedagogia.v27i2.105461>
- Neves, J., et al. (2024). Ethical leadership practices in school contexts: A quantitative and qualitative study. *Frontiers in Education*.
- OECD. (2025). Civic education as a pathway to inclusive societies. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f128be8-en>
- Oubiña López, M., & Gómez Baya, D. (2025). Interventions to promote civic engagement among youth and its outcomes on mental health: A scoping review. *Children*, 12(6), 665. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children12060665>
- Rahman, F. (2019). Pendidikan Islam dan pembentukan karakter. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 5(2), 87–102. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v5i2.5678>
- Sant, E., Davies, I., Pashby, K., & Shultz, L. (2018). Rethinking civic education in a globalized world. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 17(4), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.4119/jsse-912>
- Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2016). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education*. Routledge.
- Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2016). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education* (4th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315773331>
- Suyadi, Nuryana, Z., & Fauzi, N. A. F. (2020). The integration of Islamic education and character building. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), 143–156. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v6i1.8536>
- Wuryandani, W. (2019). Civic education in Indonesia: Challenges and prospects. *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 38(2), 321–332. <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v38i2.24537>
- Zubaedi. (2018). *Desain pendidikan karakter: Konsepsi dan aplikasinya dalam lembaga pendidikan*. Kencana. (No DOI available)