

Issue-Based Citizenship Learning through Indonesian Argumentative Texts: Its Impact on Students' Civic Reasoning and Writing Skills

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Abstract

This study examines pre-to-post score change associated with citizenship issue-based learning through Indonesian argumentative texts on students' civic reasoning and writing skills at senior secondary schools in Bone Regency, together with teachers' implementation experiences. Quantitative data followed a one-group pretest-posttest design, complemented rather than fully integrated in a convergent sense by qualitative data from teacher interviews and classroom observation; the study involved 210 Grade 11 students from three schools (SMAN 9 Bone, SMAN 6 Bone, and SMAN 11 Bone) and 12 Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) and Indonesian language teachers selected through purposive sampling. Quantitative data were gathered via a Civic Reasoning Test and an Argumentative Writing Assessment Rubric, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Paired-samples t-tests indicated statistically significant improvements in students' civic reasoning scores (mean increased from 61.3 to 78.6; $t(209) = 28.4$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.14$) and argumentative writing skills (mean increased from 63.8 to 80.2; $t(209) = 25.7$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.92$) following the issue-based learning intervention, although the absence of a comparison group means these gains cannot be attributed to the intervention alone and may partly reflect testing, maturation, or concurrent classroom exposure. Qualitative findings disclosed that the integration of contextually relevant citizenship issues into argumentative text production fostered critical thinking, evidence analysis, and responsible civic expression. Teachers identified time constraints and curriculum alignment as primary challenges while acknowledging marked increases in lesson relevance and student motivation. This study recommends the systematic integration of issue-based learning into PPKn and Indonesian language curricula as a contextual and literacy-grounded civic education strategy, pending corroboration through controlled or stronger quasi-experimental designs.

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Introduction

Civic education in the digital age confronts unprecedented challenges that demand pedagogical approaches that are more contextual, critically oriented, and action-focused. In Indonesia, the subject of Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan (PPKn Pancasila and Civic Education) is designed to cultivate citizens who are principled, democratic, and responsible. Nevertheless, its implementation has frequently remained normative in character, insufficiently addressing the critical-thinking skills and civic literacy competencies that students require in real-world contexts (Agus et al., 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2024). This condition underscores the pressing need for instructional models capable of embedding authentic citizenship issues into classroom learning.

Issue-based learning is an approach that positions relevant social, political, and civic issues as the central focus of instruction. It encourages students to analyze real-world problems, construct evidence-based arguments, and formulate responsible civic positions (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Journell, 2022). In the context of Indonesian language learning, argumentative texts constitute a strategically significant genre because they inherently require writers to adopt a position, build logical arguments, and engage with opposing viewpoints. Integrating citizenship issues into argumentative text production therefore holds considerable potential for developing two competencies simultaneously: civic reasoning and writing skills. The pedagogical mechanism proposed here is that constructing an argumentative text on a genuine civic issue requires students to perform, in sequence, the same operations that define civic reasoning: identifying a stance-worthy issue, gathering and weighing evidence, anticipating counterarguments, and committing to a defensible position in writing. Because the writing task externalizes each of these reasoning steps, practicing the genre is hypothesized to simultaneously rehearse and strengthen civic-reasoning skill, rather than the two competencies merely co-occurring within the same lesson.

Civic reasoning is defined as the capacity to identify civic issues, evaluate evidence, consider multiple perspectives, and formulate conclusions supported by well-reasoned arguments (Breakstone et al., 2021; Monte-Sano et al., 2014). This competency is essential for cultivating citizens who can participate meaningfully in democratic life. Argumentative writing skills, in parallel, reflect students' ability to organize ideas, employ language effectively, and convey perspectives in a manner that is both persuasive and responsible (Graham et al., 2020; Kuhn et al., 2016). In this study, civic reasoning is operationalized specifically as the three dimensions captured by the Civic Reasoning Test: issue identification, evidence evaluation, and perspective consideration so that the construct definition, the test blueprint, and the citizenship issue-based intervention tasks refer to a shared, consistent skill set. Claims made from the test scores in this paper are accordingly bounded by what these three dimensions capture and should not be conflated with the broader "civic online reasoning" construct, which concerns the evaluation of digital information sources and was not assessed here.

Prior research has demonstrated that classroom-based learning centered on controversial issues can enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and democratic dispositions (Geboers et al., 2013; Hess & McAvoy, 2020). However, studies that specifically integrate citizenship issues with argumentative text instruction within the PPKn and Indonesian language curriculum particularly in South Sulawesi remain extremely limited. This research gap constitutes the empirical foundation and primary motivation of the present study. Taken together, the studies reviewed above establish, separately, that issue-centered instruction can strengthen civic competencies (Geboers et al., 2013; Hess & McAvoy, 2020) and that authentic, relevant writing tasks can strengthen argumentative writing competencies (Graham et al., 2020; De La Paz & Felton, 2010), and South Sulawesi-based work has documented related digital-citizenship outcomes among Indonesian students (Agus et al., 2025). What has not been established is whether a single classroom intervention that fuses argumentative-text production with locally grounded citizenship issues produces concurrent gains in both outcomes, and whether civic reasoning and writing skills function as mutually reinforcing processes within that intervention rather than as two competencies that simply happen to co-occur. The present study is designed to test this joint, locally contextualized claim, rather than to provide a location-specific replication of the issue-based-learning literature.

Bone Regency in South Sulawesi provides a socially and culturally rich setting uniquely suited to the development of issue-based learning. Local issues such as natural resource management, the rights of indigenous Bugis communities, youth participation in regional governance, and digital intolerance are concerns that resonate directly with students' lived experiences while simultaneously carrying significant civic relevance. SMAN 9 Bone, SMAN 6 Bone, and SMAN 11 Bone were selected as research sites because these three schools represent urban, semi-urban, and peri-urban contexts respectively, providing meaningful variation in students' civic experiences. The urban, semi-urban, and peri-urban labels reflect the research team's classification based on each school's catchment area, student commuting patterns, and proximity to Bone Regency's administrative center, cross-referenced with population density data published by Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Kabupaten Bone (2023) and each school's official profile as documented in the Dapodik (Data Pokok Pendidikan) registry. SMAN 9 Bone is located within the Watampone urban core; SMAN 6 Bone serves a semi-urban catchment that includes both town-edge and rural-fringe households; and SMAN 11 Bone draws primarily from peri-urban and agricultural communities in the libureng and camming sub-districts. The four local issues selected for the intervention environmental governance, youth participation in regional elections, indigenous Bugis community rights, and digital misinformation were identified through a preliminary needs-assessment survey administered to a convenience sample of 30 Grade 11 students and six teachers across the three schools in December 2025, and each issue was confirmed as locally salient by a majority of respondents at all three sites.

This study pursues three objectives: (1) to analyze the impact of citizenship issue-based learning through argumentative texts on the civic reasoning of senior secondary students in Bone Regency; (2) to examine its effect on students' argumentative writing skills; and (3) to explore the challenges and enabling factors in its implementation from teachers' perspectives. In so doing, this study aims to contribute empirical evidence to the development of a more contextual and literacy-grounded model of PPKn instruction in Indonesia. These three objectives are tied together by a single explanatory proposition: that exposing students to locally grounded citizenship issues through structured argumentative-writing tasks is associated with concurrent pre-to-post change in civic reasoning and writing performance, and that teachers' implementation experiences help explain the classroom conditions under which that change is more or less likely to occur. The quantitative strand is used to detect and describe the pattern of change; the qualitative strand is used, at the Discussion stage, to contextualize and qualify rather than independently confirm that quantitative pattern.

Literature Review

Issue-Based Learning in Civic Education

Issue-based learning has long been recognized as one of the most effective approaches in civic education. It is rooted in the tradition of deliberative democracy, which holds that good citizens must be capable of engaging in evidence-based public discourse oriented toward the common good (Journell, 2022). Within this framework, controversial and socially relevant issues serve as entry points for developing authentic civic competencies.

Hess and McAvoy (2020) distinguish between open questions issues still contested in democratic discourse and without a single defensible answer and closed questions, which carry settled normative or empirical resolutions. Their research in American secondary schools demonstrated that teachers skilled in professionally facilitating discussions of controversial issues

effectively enhanced students' critical thinking and tolerance for differing viewpoints. These findings are reinforced by Geboers et al.'s (2013) systematic review of citizenship-education research, which found that an open and democratic classroom climate involving discussion and dialogue was among the most consistently effective conditions for promoting students' citizenship development.

In the Indonesian context, Prasetyo et al. (2024) argue that civic education continues to be dominated by a unidirectional knowledge-transmission approach, which inadequately develops participatory competencies and democratic reasoning. Afrilihadi et al. (2025) further contend that integrating issue-based learning into PPKn requires not only methodological change but also a transformation of school culture to support the free expression of opinion and critical dialogue.

Civic Reasoning as a Civic Competency

Civic reasoning is a multidimensional construct encompassing the ability to identify civic issues, evaluate sources and evidence, weigh diverse perspectives, and articulate positions supported by compelling arguments (Breakstone et al., 2021; Monte-Sano et al., 2014). This construct differs fundamentally from passive citizenship, which merely emphasizes conformity to norms and regulations; it instead presupposes active citizenship requiring both analytical and reflective capacities.

Breakstone et al. (2021) developed the civic online reasoning framework, emphasizing the critical importance of students' capacity to evaluate digital information in an era saturated with disinformation. Their study found that most American high school students were unable to distinguish between factual news, opinion, and propaganda a finding directly relevant to Indonesia, where digital literacy and digital citizenship remain serious challenges (Agus et al., 2025).

Monte-Sano et al. (2014) show that civic reasoning can be cultivated through document-based learning and primary source analysis. Students trained to use primary sources to understand historical and contemporary issues exhibited significant improvements in analytical ability, evidence evaluation, and argumentation. This approach aligns with the spirit of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Freedom Curriculum), which emphasizes project-based and inquiry-driven learning (Kemdikbudristek, 2022).

Argumentative Texts and Writing Skills

Argumentative text is a genre of writing that aims to persuade readers by presenting logical arguments, supported by evidence, and by responding to counterarguments. Within Indonesian language instruction at the senior secondary level, argumentative text is a core genre mandated by the Kurikulum Merdeka. Proficiency in this genre encompasses the ability to formulate a clear thesis, develop coherent arguments, present data and facts as evidence, and employ persuasive and effective language (Graham et al., 2020; Kuhn et al., 2016). Theoretically, the link between this genre and civic reasoning is not assumed to be incidental: producing a thesis, marshalling evidence, and answering counterarguments in writing requires the writer to first complete the cognitive operations that civic reasoning comprises. On this account, writing functions as a mediating mechanism the act of composing an argumentative text forces explicit, sequential practice of evidence evaluation and perspective-taking, which is expected to transfer to civic reasoning performance, while gains in civic reasoning, in turn, supply the analytical content that makes the resulting text more evidence-based and rhetorically responsible. The two outcomes are therefore treated as reciprocally reinforcing rather than as a single skill measured twice.

In their landmark meta-analysis, Graham et al. (2020) found that the most effective writing instruction strategies include modeling the writing process, providing formative feedback, and integrating writing with the reading of relevant texts. Integrating citizenship issues into argumentative writing instruction creates an authentic context that motivates students to write with meaningful purpose. When students write about issues they care about and that are relevant to their lives, the quality and depth of their written work tend to improve substantially (Kuhn et al., 2016).

De La Paz and Felton (2010) demonstrated that argumentative writing instruction integrated with history content produced significant gains in both argument quality longer, more persuasive essays with more elaborated claims and rebuttals and historical accuracy. This integration goes beyond enhancing technical writing skills; it also fosters a deeper grasp of the issues under study. These findings strongly support the argument that citizenship issue-based learning through argumentative texts holds considerable potential for developing both competencies simultaneously.

Integration of Civic Education and Language Literacy

The integration of civic education and language literacy is not a novel concept, yet its implementation in Indonesia remains markedly limited. In several advanced educational systems, civic literacy has been embedded as an integral component of the language arts and social studies curriculum. This approach rests on the premise that the ability to read critically and write persuasively is a prerequisite for effective civic participation (Kirkland, 2022; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Kirkland (2022) emphasizes the centrality of critical literacy in civic education a perspective in which students learn not only to read texts but also to read the social and political world around them. From this standpoint, argumentative texts are not merely linguistic exercises; they are also civic practices that demand students take positions on issues affecting their communities. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) add that critical, literacy-grounded pedagogy carries transformative potential for preparing students from marginalized communities to participate in democratic life.

Within Indonesia's curricular context, the integration of PPKn and Indonesian language instruction has a strong policy foundation in the Kurikulum Merdeka, which promotes cross-disciplinary and project-based learning. However, empirical research examining the impact of this integration on students' specific competencies particularly in South Sulawesi remains extremely sparse, and the present study is designed to address this gap. Concretely, the intervention was mapped onto the *Capaian Pembelajaran* (Learning Outcomes) for PPKn and Bahasa Indonesia at Fase F (Grade 11) as stipulated in Kepmendikbudristek No. 033/H/KR/2022. For PPKn, the relevant CP element is Elemen Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia, specifically the strand requiring students to "menganalisis secara kritis berbagai isu kewarganegaraan kontemporer dan merumuskan respons civic yang bertanggung jawab" (critically analyze contemporary citizenship issues and formulate responsible civic responses). For Bahasa Indonesia, the relevant CP element is Elemen Menulis, which requires students to "memproduksi teks argumentasi yang menyatakan posisi dengan dukungan bukti dan alasan yang logis" (produce argumentative texts that state a position supported by evidence and logical reasoning). The eight-week intervention was delivered within the existing timetable allocation: four 45-minute periods per week shared between PPKn and Bahasa Indonesia teachers on a co-teaching schedule agreed upon by the three schools' academic coordinators. The intervention therefore replaced rather than supplemented the corresponding regular PPKn and Bahasa Indonesia lessons for the participating Grade 11 classes during the eight-week period, with no additional out-of-timetable hours required of students.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and subsequently merged in the interpretive phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). More precisely, the quantitative component is a one-group pretest-posttest design: all 210 students received the same intervention and there was no untreated comparison group, while the qualitative interviews and classroom observations were collected from teachers during and immediately after the same eight-week intervention period rather than on an independent timeline. The study is therefore best characterized as a quantitative pretest-posttest design with an embedded qualitative component, rather than as a fully convergent mixed-methods design in the strict methodological sense of Creswell and Plano Clark (2023). This design was selected on the basis of the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation: the impact of citizenship issue-based learning cannot be fully understood through numerical data alone but requires contextually rich understanding of the processes and experiences of both students and teachers. To make the relationship between the two strands explicit despite this design limitation, the quantitative score patterns and the qualitative themes, where points of convergence and divergence between the statistical pattern and teachers' accounts are identified directly, followed by a single stated meta-inference.

Table 1. Joint Display: Quantitative Findings and Corresponding Qualitative Themes

Outcome / Dimension	Gain Score	t / p / d	Corresponding Qualitative Theme	Convergence / Divergence
Civic Reasoning (overall)	+17.3 pts	t(209)=28.4, p<.001, d=2.14	Theme 4: Observable improvement in argument quality	Convergent: teachers observed progressive improvement in evidence use and reasoning across weeks, consistent with statistical gain
Evidence Evaluation (largest CRT gain)	+21.3 pts	Dimension-level descriptive	Theme 1: Issue relevance as motivational catalyst; Theme 4: Argument quality	Convergent: teachers reported students proactively seeking BPS data and local regulations, corroborated by observation notes
Argumentative Writing (overall)	+16.4 pts	t(209)=25.7, p<.001, d=1.92	Theme 4: Argument quality; Theme 1: Motivational catalyst	Convergent: qualitative accounts of purposeful writing with real-world stakes align with quantitative improvement across all 5 AWAR dimensions
Implementation conditions (barriers)	N/A	N/A (qualitative only)	Theme 2: Sensitive-issue facilitation; Theme 3: Time constraints	Divergent from quantitative optimism: high gains coexisted with real implementation strain; quantitative data alone

Outcome / Dimension	Gain Score	t / p / d	Corresponding Qualitative Theme	Convergence / Divergence
				would overstate ease of delivery

Research Participants

The study involved 210 Grade 11 students from three public senior secondary schools in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi: SMAN 9 Bone (70 students), SMAN 6 Bone (70 students), and SMAN 11 Bone (70 students). Grade 11 students were selected on the grounds that they had already developed a foundational understanding of PPKn in Grade 10 and were thus prepared to engage with more complex civic issues. In addition, the study recruited 12 PPKn and Indonesian language teachers through purposive sampling, based on a minimum of five years' teaching experience and active involvement in school-level curriculum development. All 210 students were drawn from intact Grade 11 classes at the three participating schools through whole-class sampling, and no class composition was altered for the purposes of the study. Because participants were minors, the study was conducted under ethical approval granted by the Research Ethics Committee of LPPM, Universitas Bosowa (Komite Etik Penelitian LPPM Universitas Bosowa, UNIBOS), Approval No. 158.1.01/LPPM-UNIBOS/I/2026, issued in January 2026, with written informed consent obtained from parents/guardians, student assent obtained directly from participants, and procedures in place to protect participant data and allow withdrawal without penalty. All 210 enrolled students completed both the pretest and posttest assessments. No participants withdrew, were absent on both testing occasions, or had incomplete data; the analytic sample therefore equals the full enrolled sample (N = 210, attrition rate = 0%). At each school, the intervention was delivered by the PPKn and Indonesian language teachers already assigned to the participating classes rather than by a common set of teachers across sites; this between-school difference in who delivered the intervention is treated as a potential source of implementation variability and is revisited in the Limitations.

Table 2. presents the demographic profile of student participants

School	No. of Students	Male	Female	Mean Age
SMAN 9 Bone	70	32	38	16.4 years
SMAN 6 Bone	70	29	41	16.6 years
SMAN 11 Bone	70	35	35	16.5 years
Total	210	96	114	16.5 years

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of teacher participants.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Teacher Participants

Teacher Code	Gender	Subject	Teaching Experience	School
T-1	Female	PPKn	12 years	SMAN 9 Bone
T-2	Male	PPKn	8 years	SMAN 9 Bone
T-3	Female	Indonesian	10 years	SMAN 9 Bone
T-4	Female	Indonesian	7 years	SMAN 9 Bone
T-5	Male	PPKn	15 years	SMAN 6 Bone
T-6	Female	PPKn	9 years	SMAN 6 Bone
T-7	Male	Indonesian	11 years	SMAN 6 Bone
T-8	Female	Indonesian	6 years	SMAN 6 Bone
T-9	Female	PPKn	13 years	SMAN 11 Bone
T-10	Male	PPKn	5 years	SMAN 11 Bone
T-11	Female	Indonesian	9 years	SMAN 11 Bone
T-12	Male	Indonesian	14 years	SMAN 11 Bone

Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative data were collected using two primary instruments. The first was the Civic Reasoning Test (CRT), comprising 25 scenario-based items that assessed students' capacity to identify civic issues, evaluate evidence, consider multiple perspectives, and formulate evidence-backed positions. The second was the Argumentative Writing Assessment Rubric (AWAR), which evaluated five dimensions: thesis and position (20%), argument development (25%), use of evidence (25%), response to counterarguments (15%), and cohesion and register (15%). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.83 for the CRT and 0.87 for the AWAR, indicating good to excellent internal consistency. The 25 CRT items were distributed across the three civic-reasoning dimensions operationalized in the Literature Review: issue identification (8 items, targeting Bloom's analysis and evaluation levels), evidence evaluation (9 items, targeting evaluation and synthesis), and perspective consideration (8 items, targeting analysis and evaluation). All items were scenario-based multiple-choice questions developed by the research team through a three-stage process: (1) item drafting guided by the civic reasoning frameworks of Breakstone et al. (2021) and Monte-Sano et al. (2014); (2) content validity review by five subject-matter experts (three PPKn lecturers and two Bahasa Indonesia lecturers, all holding doctoral qualifications), yielding an Aiken's V coefficient of ≥ 0.80 for all retained items (range: 0.80–0.96), indicating adequate content validity; and (3) a pilot administration with 40 Grade 11 students from a school outside the study sample, following which two items with item-total correlations below 0.20 were revised before the final instrument was assembled. Items were scored dichotomously (1 = correct, 0 = incorrect), summed across the 25 items, and linearly transformed to a 0–100 scale. An example item from the evidence evaluation dimension presented students with two news articles reporting conflicting statistics on youth voter turnout in a recent regional election and asked them to identify which claim was better supported by the evidence provided and to explain the basis for their judgment.

The AWAR was adapted for the Indonesian secondary context from established argumentative-writing rubric traditions (Graham et al., 2020; Kuhn et al., 2016). Essay scoring was performed by four trained raters: two PPKn teachers and two Bahasa Indonesia teachers, none of whom taught the participating classes, thus eliminating scorer familiarity as a source of bias. Prior to scoring, all four raters completed a two-day calibration workshop in which they independently scored a set of 20 anchor essays (10 pre-intervention, 10 post-intervention) drawn from a non-participating school, discussed discrepancies, and reached consensus on rubric descriptors for each dimension-level combination. All 420 essays (210 pre $\times$ 1 + 210 post $\times$ 1 per student) were randomized and anonymized identifiers and pre/post labels were removed before distribution to raters, so that raters were blind to both student identity and assessment occasion. Each essay was scored independently by two raters; in cases where scores for any dimension diverged by more than one scale point, a third rater adjudicated. Inter-rater reliability, assessed using the two-way mixed-effects Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC; absolute agreement, single-measures), was ICC = 0.88 (95% CI (0.85, 0.91)) for the total weighted score and ranged from ICC = 0.84 to 0.91 across the five dimensions, indicating good to excellent inter-rater consistency (Koo & Mae, 2016). The dimensional weightings (thesis and position 20%; argument development 25%; use of evidence 25%; response to counterarguments 15%; cohesion and register 15%) were established a priori on the basis of their relative cognitive demand and centrality to the issue-based argumentative task, and were reviewed and endorsed by the content-validity expert panel. Each dimension was scored on a 0–100 scale

before weighting, so no cross-dimension normalization was required prior to computing the weighted total.

The instructional intervention spanned eight weeks. Students were presented with citizenship topics directly relevant to the local Bone context, including environmental governance, youth participation in regional elections, and misinformation on social media. They were guided through the structured production of argumentative texts on these topics. Pre- and post-intervention tests were administered to measure change. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the 12 participating teachers and through classroom observation across the intervention period. Across the eight weeks, each citizenship topic was addressed through a common four-stage instructional cycle: issue introduction and stimulus discussion, guided evidence gathering, structured drafting of the argumentative text with teacher conferencing, and feedback followed by revision. The intervention comprised a total of 32 lessons (four 45-minute lessons per week $\times$ 8 weeks). Three citizenship topics were covered sequentially: environmental governance and deforestation in Bone (Weeks 1–3, 12 lessons), youth participation in regional elections (Weeks 4–6, 12 lessons), and digital misinformation on social media (Weeks 7–8, 8 lessons). Each topic was supported by a standardized instructional package developed by the research team, comprising a teacher guide, a student issue-briefing dossier with primary and secondary source materials, a structured writing scaffold (graphic organizer for thesis, evidence, counterargument, and conclusion), and a peer-feedback protocol. Before the intervention commenced, all 12 participating teachers attended a full-day professional development workshop facilitated by the two principal investigators, covering the theoretical rationale for issue-based learning, the four-stage instructional cycle, strategies for facilitating discussions on sensitive issues, and procedures for using the writing scaffold and feedback protocol. Implementation fidelity was monitored through three mechanisms: (a) a teacher lesson-log submitted after each lesson confirming which cycle stage was completed, (b) unannounced classroom observations conducted by one of the two research assistants on at least two occasions per school per topic cycle, and (c) a brief fidelity checklist completed by the observing researcher. Fidelity logs were reviewed weekly; no school fell below 85% lesson completion across the eight weeks, indicating adequate and consistent implementation across all three sites. Detailed lesson-by-lesson documentation is available from the corresponding author upon request to facilitate replication by other researchers.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages) and paired-samples t-tests to determine the statistical significance of score changes between the pre- and post-intervention assessments. Prior to the paired-samples t-tests, the distribution of pre-intervention, post-intervention, and difference scores for both the CRT and the AWAR was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test. For the CRT, the difference scores did not significantly depart from normality ($W = 0.987$, $p = .063$); for the AWAR, the Shapiro-Wilk statistic likewise indicated approximate normality of difference scores ($W = 0.984$, $p = .049$, borderline). Given the large sample size ($N = 210$) and the robustness of the paired t-test to moderate departures from normality at this sample size (Lumley et al., 2002), parametric testing was judged appropriate. Outlier inspection using the interquartile-range criterion (scores below $Q1 - 1.5 \times IQR$ or above $Q3 + 1.5 \times IQR$ on the difference-score distribution) identified three potential outliers in the CRT and two in the AWAR; sensitivity analyses conducted with and without these five cases produced

negligible differences (Δ CRT mean gain < 0.3 points; Δ AWAR mean gain < 0.2 points), and all 210 cases were retained. No data were missing. All t-tests were two-tailed, with $\alpha = .05$., a single pooled paired-samples t-test treats all 210 observations as fully independent and may understate the true standard error; results are therefore reported alongside the school-level estimates in Table 4, and a nested (student-within-school) analysis is recommended as a future robustness check. Readers should accordingly treat the pooled significance test as a conservative summary of within-sample change rather than as a fully independent-samples test, since clustering by school and potentially by class or teacher can inflate the apparent precision of the pooled estimate and contribute to the unusually large effect size reported below. As a supplementary robustness check, a two-level linear mixed-effects model (students nested within schools) was fitted to the difference scores using restricted maximum likelihood estimation; the school-level variance component was small (ICC = 0.031), indicating that only approximately 3% of the total variance in score change was attributable to between-school differences. The pooled paired t-test estimate therefore provides a reasonable, if slightly optimistic, summary of within-sample change, and the mixed-effects model results are consistent in direction and magnitude. Qualitative data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2021), encompassing open coding, theme development, and validation through member checking with selected participants. Qualitative data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2021), encompassing open coding, theme development, and validation through member checking with selected participants. Coding was conducted by two members of the research team (the first author and a doctoral research assistant with prior training in qualitative educational research), working independently on the same transcript corpus before meeting to compare and reconcile codes. In the first coding pass, 187 initial codes were generated across the 12 interview transcripts. These were iteratively grouped into candidate themes through a process of constant comparison, resulting in 11 candidate themes that were subsequently consolidated through discussion between the two coders and cross-referencing with the observation notes into the four principal themes reported below. Points of disagreement between coders were resolved through consensus discussion; in two cases where consensus was not immediately reached, a third senior researcher served as a tie-breaker. An audit trail documenting the progression from initial codes to final themes is maintained by the research team and available from the corresponding author upon request. Qualitative findings were integrated with quantitative results at the Discussion stage through the Joint Display presented in Table 1, where convergences and divergences between the statistical pattern and teachers' implementation accounts are identified explicitly, yielding a single stated meta-inference.

Result and Discussion

Impact on Students' Civic Reasoning

Data analysis revealed statistically significant pre-to-post improvements in civic reasoning scores across all three schools; as noted below, this single-group design cannot by itself separate the intervention's effect from maturation, repeated-testing, regression to the mean, or concurrent teaching, so the change is reported here without yet asserting causal attribution. Table 3 presents a comparison of pre- and post-intervention scores.

Table 4. Pre- and Post-Intervention Civic Reasoning Score Comparison.

School	Pre (M)	Pre (SD)	Post (M)	Post (SD)	Gain Score	% Mastery Post
SMAN 9 Bone	62.1	8.4	79.3	6.2	17.2	88.6%

SMAN 6 Bone	60.8	9.1	78.2	7.1	17.4	84.3%
SMAN 11 Bone	61.1	8.7	78.4	6.8	17.3	85.7%
Overall	61.3	8.7	78.6	6.7	17.3	86.2%

The paired-samples t-test indicated a highly significant difference between pre- and post-intervention scores ($t(209) = 28.4$; $p < .001$; $d = 2.14$), reflecting a large observed within-sample change. Because this study used a one-group pretest-posttest design without a comparison group, this change cannot be attributed to the intervention alone; testing effects (familiarity with the CRT format), maturation over the eight-week period, and concurrent exposure to related content in other classes or media remain plausible alternative or contributing explanations and cannot be ruled out by the present design. The civic reasoning dimensions showing the greatest gains were evidence evaluation (gain = 21.3 points) and perspective consideration (gain = 19.6 points), while issue identification showed a more moderate improvement (gain = 12.8 points). The 95% confidence interval for the mean gain score was (16.1, 18.5) points, and for Cohen's d was (1.92, 2.36), indicating that the effect size estimate, while large by conventional benchmarks, was consistently large across plausible sampling variation. As a sensitivity check, the effect size was re-estimated using the school-level standard deviations in Table 3 as denominators; the resulting estimates (d range: 2.01–2.19 across schools) were consistent with the pooled value. The large effect size likely reflects, in part, the within-person design (paired t-test removes stable between-person variance), the relatively modest baseline scores (ceiling effects on the pretest are not a concern, but floor-level starting points can amplify gain magnitudes), and the absence of a control group. These factors do not invalidate the finding but counsel against direct comparison of $d = 2.14$ with effect sizes from between-groups designs in the literature.

Impact on Argumentative Writing Skills

Analysis of the argumentative writing assessment rubric revealed a comparable pattern of improvement. Table 4 presents mean scores per assessment dimension before and after the intervention. The pre- and post-intervention writing prompts were designed to be parallel in topic type, length, and cognitive demand: both presented students with a two-sided civic issue scenario accompanied by a brief factual dossier and asked students to write a 400–600 word argumentative text defending a clearly stated position. Topic equivalence was reviewed by the content-validity expert panel, which confirmed that neither prompt was inherently easier or more motivating than the other. As described above, all essays were anonymized and randomized prior to scoring, so that raters were fully blind to assessment occasion (pre or post). The weighted total score was computed by multiplying each dimension score (0–100) by its designated weight and summing: Weighted Total = (Thesis $\times$ 0.20) + (Argument Development $\times$ 0.25) + (Evidence $\times$ 0.25) + (Counterargument $\times$ 0.15) + (Cohesion $\times$ 0.15). For example, a student scoring 80 on Thesis, 78 on Argument Development, 75 on Evidence, 82 on Counterargument, and 85 on Cohesion would receive a Weighted Total of $(80 \times 0.20) + (78 \times 0.25) + (75 \times 0.25) + (82 \times 0.15) + (85 \times 0.15) = 16.0 + 19.5 + 18.75 + 12.3 + 12.75 = 79.3$.

Table 5. Pre- and Post-Intervention Argumentative Writing Skills Score Comparison by Dimension

Assessment Dimension	Weight	Pre (M)	Post (M)	Gain Score
Thesis and Position	20%	62.4	80.7	18.3
Argument Development	25%	61.8	79.4	17.6
Use of Evidence	25%	58.9	76.8	17.9

Response to Counterarguments	15%	65.2	82.1	16.9
Cohesion and Register	15%	70.7	82.1	11.4
Weighted Total	100%	63.8	80.2	16.4

The dimensions of use of evidence and argument development showed the most substantial gains. This ordering is reported descriptively from the dimension-level means in Table 4. Although a formal repeated-measures ANOVA on dimension-level gain scores was not feasible within the available data structure (dimension scores for the same student are not independent), the descriptive pattern is consistent and aligned with theoretical expectations: the two most cognitively demanding dimensions those requiring active retrieval, evaluation, and integration of external evidence showed the largest improvements, while the more surface-level cohesion and register dimension, for which students likely already had a functional baseline, showed the most modest gain. Descriptively, the pattern is consistent with issue-based learning having motivated students to actively seek, evaluate, and integrate evidence into their arguments. The paired-samples t-test for total writing skill scores was likewise highly significant ($t(209) = 25.7$; $p < .001$; $d = 1.92$). As with civic reasoning, these writing-skill gains are statistically significant but cannot be causally attributed to the intervention alone without a comparison group; testing familiarity, maturation, and general instruction during the same period remain plausible concurrent explanations. The 95% confidence interval for the mean gain in total writing skill scores was (15.1, 17.7) points, and for Cohen's d was (1.71, 2.13). Prior to the t-test, Shapiro-Wilk testing of AWAR difference scores yielded $W = 0.984$ ($p = .049$), indicating borderline normality; given $N = 210$, the t-test is robust to this marginal departure. The five potential outliers identified in the Data Analysis section had negligible influence on the AWAR result (Δ mean gain < 0.2 points upon exclusion), and all cases were retained.

Table 6. Distribution of Argumentative Text Quality Levels Post-Intervention

Quality Level	Score Range	SMAN 9 Bone	SMAN 6 Bone	SMAN 11 Bone	Total
Excellent	85–100	18 (25.7%)	16 (22.9%)	17 (24.3%)	51 (24.3%)
Good	75–84	36 (51.4%)	35 (50.0%)	36 (51.4%)	107 (51.0%)
Satisfactory	65–74	12 (17.1%)	14 (20.0%)	13 (18.6%)	39 (18.6%)
Developing	<65	4 (5.7%)	5 (7.1%)	4 (5.7%)	13 (6.2%)

Qualitative Findings: Teachers' Perspectives

Thematic analysis of interviews with the 12 participating teachers yielded four principal themes that illuminate their experiences in implementing citizenship issue-based learning through argumentative texts. The four themes below are illustrated with representative quotations. Table 6a (Thematic Coding Distribution) presents the frequency and spread of each theme across the 12 teachers and three schools. All 12 teachers contributed data to at least three of the four themes; no single theme was reported by fewer than eight of the twelve teachers. One divergent pattern was observed: two teachers (T-10 from SMAN 11 Bone and T-4 from SMAN 9 Bone) did not report increased student motivation as an unconditional outcome. T-10 noted that "a few students remained disengaged even with local issues, perhaps because they had low prior reading habits," and T-4 observed that "the improvement in motivation was more visible in students who already had some civic awareness coming in." These accounts are retained as negative cases and are discussed in the Context and Limitations subsection of the Discussion. Because the qualitative strand presented here is teacher-centered, claims about student learning processes are grounded primarily in teacher reports and researcher observations rather than direct student accounts; readers should interpret the motivational and process-related findings accordingly. Classroom observation notes corroborate

the teacher reports in several respects: during Weeks 2 and 5, the observing researcher documented student-initiated reference to BPS statistical tables and local government regulations in at least four of six observed class sessions, consistent with Teacher Theme 4. Additionally, the research team collected brief written reflections from a convenience subsample of 45 students (15 per school) at the end of Weeks 4 and 8; representative excerpts are cited where relevant in the Discussion.

Theme 1: Issue Relevance as a Motivational Catalyst. Teachers consistently reported that using issues closely tied to students' lives in Bone Regency substantially elevated learning motivation. T-1 from SMAN 9 Bone stated:

"When we used the issue of deforestation in the hills of Bone as the topic for the argumentative text, the students were immediately energized. They had direct personal experience with it and began searching for data on their own, without being asked."

Theme 2: The Complexity of Facilitating Discussions on Sensitive Issues. Several teachers encountered difficulty in facilitating discussions on issues that carried political or social sensitivity. T-5 from SMAN 6 Bone disclosed:

"When discussing the regional election issue, I had to be very careful to keep the discussion academic and prevent it from becoming an arena for division. This demands facilitation skills that not every teacher possesses."

Theme 3: Time Constraints and Curriculum Pressure. The primary barrier identified by teachers was the pressure to complete a demanding curriculum within a fixed instructional calendar. T-9 from SMAN 11 Bone emphasized:

"This issue-based approach requires considerably more time. A single topic can take three or four class meetings to explore properly. Meanwhile, we must keep pace with the mandated learning outcomes."

Theme 4: Observable Improvement in Argument Quality. Teachers consistently observed improvements in argument quality across the intervention period. T-3 from SMAN 9 Bone noted:

"In the first week, students' arguments were very general and not grounded in data. By the sixth week, I saw them citing regional regulations, Statistics Indonesia data, and news articles as evidence. That was remarkable progress."

Discussion

The findings address the three research objectives by demonstrating concurrent improvements in students' civic reasoning and argumentative writing, while also identifying the conditions that facilitated or constrained implementation. Civic reasoning increased from 61.3 to 78.6, representing a mean gain of 17.3 points and a large within-sample effect size ($d = 2.14$). Argumentative writing similarly increased from 63.8 to 80.2, with a gain of 16.4 points and a large effect size ($d = 1.92$). The most substantial civic-reasoning gains occurred in evidence evaluation and perspective consideration, whereas the largest writing gains were observed in thesis construction, evidence use, and argument development. Teachers' accounts complemented these statistical patterns by describing stronger student motivation, more active evidence seeking, and progressively more substantiated arguments. Nevertheless, the findings indicate pre-to-post associations rather than definitive intervention effects because maturation, repeated testing, concurrent instruction, and other uncontrolled influences cannot be excluded.

At the international level, the improvement in evidence evaluation is consistent with the growing emphasis on preparing students to assess information critically rather than merely reproduce civic knowledge. Breakstone et al. (2021) found that many secondary students encountered considerable difficulty when evaluating the credibility of online information, indicating that exposure to digital content alone does not generate competent civic judgment. The present

findings suggest that repeated engagement with conflicting claims, statistical evidence, regulations, and community-based problems may provide a productive structure through which evaluative reasoning can be rehearsed. This comparison should remain conceptually bounded because the Civic Reasoning Test used in the present study assessed scenario-based issue identification, evidence evaluation, and perspective consideration rather than the complete construct of civic online reasoning. The cross-curricular arrangement also aligns with White and Schoenfeld's (2023) proposition that civic reasoning and problem solving should permeate different subjects and remain political in substance without becoming institutionally partisan. The Bone intervention operationalized this principle by combining PPKn content with Indonesian argumentative writing instead of positioning civic reasoning as an isolated subject-specific outcome.

The argumentative-writing findings similarly support international evidence concerning writing as a mechanism for disciplinary learning. Graham et al. (2020) concluded that writing about subject matter can improve students' comprehension and application of knowledge across social studies, science, and mathematics. The current pattern extends this argument by showing that writing about civic problems was associated not only with better textual performance but also with improvement in the reasoning processes that supplied the substance of the texts. The comparatively greater gains in evidence use and argument development than in cohesion and register suggest that the intervention primarily strengthened higher-order epistemic activity rather than merely improving surface-level language control. The effect sizes in this study are considerably larger than those usually reported in controlled writing-to-learn research, but they are not directly comparable because the present estimates were derived from paired observations, modest baseline scores, and a design without a control group. The magnitude should consequently be interpreted as evidence of substantial change within the participating sample rather than as an estimate of superiority over conventional instruction.

The qualitative findings further indicate that cognitive development was intertwined with motivational and emotional conditions. Locally recognizable issues appeared to give students a meaningful reason to investigate evidence and articulate positions, which is compatible with self-determination theory's contention that perceived relevance, competence, autonomy, and social connection can strengthen internalized motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This theoretical explanation remains provisional because motivational needs were not directly measured. Graf et al. (2024) similarly demonstrated that emotions experienced during political discussions and the processing of political information are related to students' motivation, engagement, and civic knowledge. The negative cases in the present study are therefore analytically important: some students with weak reading habits remained disengaged, while another student expressed anxiety about presenting a potentially incorrect political opinion. Issue relevance alone may not ensure participation when learners lack reading confidence, prior civic knowledge, or psychological safety. Effective issue-based instruction must consequently combine authentic problems with differentiated literacy support and non-punitive discussion norms.

The results also correspond with recent Indonesian research calling for a transition from normative civic instruction toward participatory, digitally informed, and context-sensitive learning. Fajri et al. (2022) identified students, teachers, curriculum, democratic participation, and digital engagement as central components of digital citizenship education. Prasetyo et al. (2024) likewise showed that responsible digital citizenship is shaped by interconnected factors, including internet

skills, attitudes, and self-efficacy, rather than by civic knowledge alone. In South Sulawesi, Agus et al. (2025) found that high school students displayed awareness of online ethics and misinformation but remained comparatively passive in digital civic participation. The present study adds a potentially actionable instructional mechanism to these observations: students were not only informed about citizenship issues but were required to investigate, evaluate, defend, and revise a position. This movement from awareness toward evidence-based expression may explain why teachers observed students independently consulting BPS statistics, regional regulations, and news sources.

The local findings nevertheless should not be interpreted as evidence that curricular integration automatically resolves all difficulties in Indonesian civic education. Tambunan et al. (2024) reported that digital-literacy integration supported democratic engagement in Bandung schools, although creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration did not improve optimally across all indicators. The stronger pattern in the current study may be associated with its intensive eight-week sequence, standardized issue dossiers, explicit writing scaffold, teacher conferencing, peer feedback, and repeated revision opportunities. Indonesian studies of argumentative writing have similarly found that students require visible planning structures, collaborative reasoning, and managed feedback to construct claims supported by relevant evidence (Masrul & Yuliani, 2023; Mulyati & Hadianoto, 2023; Rosita & Halimi, 2023). The present research extends these studies by locating argumentative writing within locally consequential citizenship problems rather than treating it primarily as a linguistic or examination-oriented exercise. Teacher concerns about political sensitivity also show that the Indonesian context requires careful negotiation between respect for social authority and the educational need to question evidence, consider disagreement, and express responsible criticism.

Theoretically, the findings refine the proposed civic literacy framework by indicating that civic reasoning and argumentative writing may operate as reciprocally reinforcing processes. Civic reasoning provides the substantive operations needed for writing identifying a contestable issue, evaluating evidence, considering competing perspectives, and reaching a defensible judgment while writing externalizes these operations through thesis formation, evidence integration, counterargument treatment, and revision. Locally grounded issues appear to function as both epistemic and motivational entry points connecting these processes. The findings therefore extend writing-to-learn theory by suggesting that writing can support not only the acquisition of disciplinary content but also the organization of civic judgment and responsible public expression. Teacher facilitation and curricular flexibility should be incorporated into the framework as boundary conditions because the same politically sensitive task may promote deliberation in a psychologically safe classroom but produce silence or conformity in a punitive environment. Future theoretical testing should examine whether evidence evaluation or motivation statistically mediates the relationship between issue-based instruction and argumentative-writing performance.

Pedagogically, teachers should employ curated issue dossiers containing contrasting but credible sources, explicitly model source verification, and guide students through claim–evidence–reasoning and counterargument structures before independent writing. Co-teaching between PPKn and Indonesian language teachers could reduce curricular duplication, while reading supports should be provided for students whose limited literacy may prevent them from benefiting from open-ended issue exploration. Discussion protocols should protect disagreement, prohibit personal attacks, allow temporary non-participation, and distinguish evidence-based criticism from partisan

advocacy. These measures may support media literacy, identity exploration, and emotional well-being, although those outcomes were not directly measured and should not be claimed as demonstrated effects. At the policy level, integrated civic-literacy modules should initially be piloted and evaluated rather than immediately mandated across all schools. Educational authorities should provide dedicated instructional time, teacher development in sensitive-issue facilitation, standards for verifying digital sources, anti-harassment procedures, and referral pathways when politically or socially charged content generates distress. Policies governing students' online behavior should promote responsible expression, privacy, source transparency, and protection from abuse without turning misinformation control into excessive restriction of legitimate civic discussion.

The study contributes one of the relatively limited empirical examinations of an integrated PPKn–Indonesian language intervention in South Sulawesi that simultaneously assesses civic reasoning and argumentative writing. Its contribution lies not merely in placing two subjects within the same lesson but in specifying a mechanism through which locally grounded issues activate mutually reinforcing reasoning and writing processes. The combination of pre-to-post assessment, school-level implementation across three settings, blind essay scoring, fidelity monitoring, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and a joint interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings strengthens the explanatory value of the study. The findings also show that large learning gains can coexist with substantial implementation demands, particularly limited time, uneven reading readiness, and the emotional complexity of controversial discussions. The study consequently challenges the assumption that successful civic innovation depends only on relevant content by demonstrating that instructional scaffolding, teacher neutrality, psychological safety, and institutional flexibility are equally consequential.

Several limitations delimit the interpretation and generalizability of the findings. The absence of a control or comparison group prevents causal attribution, while the eight-week duration does not establish whether the observed gains were retained or transferred to unfamiliar civic situations. Participants were drawn from three public schools in one regency, and the use of intact classes, different teachers, and purposive school selection may have introduced contextual and implementation-related bias despite the relatively small school-level variance. The instruments demonstrated satisfactory reliability and content validity, but additional validation against established external measures would strengthen claims regarding civic reasoning and writing development. The qualitative evidence relied primarily on teachers and observations, with student reflections collected only from a convenience subsample; therefore, the motivational and emotional interpretations may underrepresent less visible or dissenting student experiences. Media literacy, psychological well-being, online conduct, and identity formation were not directly measured, so the related implications remain theoretically informed rather than empirically confirmed. Future studies should employ cluster-randomized or matched quasi-experimental designs, multilevel analysis, delayed posttests, direct student interviews, validated emotional and motivational measures, and authentic digital source-evaluation tasks across culturally diverse Indonesian regions. Research should also examine mediation and moderation mechanisms, including whether motivation, reading proficiency, evidence evaluation, teacher facilitation, or school location explains variation in learning outcomes.

Conclusion

This study examined whether citizenship issue-based learning through Indonesian argumentative texts was associated with improvements in senior secondary students' civic reasoning and argumentative writing skills, while also exploring teachers' experiences of implementing the approach in Bone Regency. The findings addressed these objectives by demonstrating statistically significant pre-to-post improvements in both outcomes, with mean gains of 17.3 points in civic reasoning and 16.4 points in argumentative writing, accompanied by large within-sample effect sizes. Qualitative evidence further indicated that locally grounded citizenship issues enhanced instructional relevance, stimulated evidence seeking, and encouraged students to formulate more reasoned and responsible arguments, although teachers simultaneously encountered difficulties related to sensitive-issue facilitation, curriculum alignment, and limited instructional time. Conceptually, the study advances a civic literacy framework in which civic reasoning and argumentative writing are understood as reciprocally reinforcing competencies: civic reasoning supplies the evaluative and perspectival foundations of argumentation, whereas writing externalizes, organizes, and consolidates civic judgment. Practically, the findings support carefully designed integration between PPKn and Indonesian language instruction through authentic issues, structured evidence analysis, writing scaffolds, formative feedback, and sustained professional development for teachers. These conclusions must nevertheless be interpreted cautiously because the study was conducted in three schools within a single regency, involved an eight-week intervention, employed research-team-developed instruments that have not yet undergone extensive external validation, and relied predominantly on teacher interviews and classroom observations for the qualitative strand. Most importantly, the absence of a control or comparison group prevents confident causal attribution, as maturation, repeated-testing effects, concurrent instruction, and variation among teachers may have contributed to the observed improvements. Future research should therefore employ matched quasi-experimental or cluster-randomized designs, include delayed posttests and broader regional samples, externally validate the assessment instruments, and incorporate student interviews, focus groups, or reflective journals to capture learners' perspectives more directly. By establishing a theoretically coherent and contextually grounded connection between civic inquiry and argumentative literacy, this study provides a substantive foundation for developing more participatory, evidence-oriented, and democratically responsive civic education in Indonesia.

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