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Mapping Civic Literacy Research: An Integrated Systematic Review and Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

This study maps the scholarly landscape of civic literacy through an integrated systematic review and bibliometric analysis. Using Scopus (search date: September, 16, 2025; coverage 1980–2025), we screened records via PRISMA and analyzed the final corpus with VOSviewer to identify publication trends, collaboration networks, and keyword co-occurrences. Results show a pronounced growth of civic literacy publications since the late 2000s, with the United States as the dominant contributor and Indonesia emerging as a notable node. Co-occurrence analysis reveals four interconnected clusters: (1) schooling and digital engagement (citizenship education, social media, misinformation); (2) democratic concerns and global issues; (3) public health and gender; and (4) creative/arts-based education. Collaboration networks remain relatively sparse, indicating opportunities to strengthen cross-national partnerships and diversify methodological approaches. The review highlights civic literacy as a transdisciplinary construct that links political knowledge, digital/media competencies, and participatory practices, and underscores the implications for curriculum design, teacher education, and policy, particullary the integration of digital literacy to meet the challenges of Society 5.0. We conclude that future research should deepen interdisciplinary integration, expand international collaboration, and develop context-responsive models for civic literacy in schools and communities.

Keywords: civic literacy, bibliometric analysis, systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

In an era when technology is evolving rapidly, social dynamics are becoming increasingly complex, and democracy is under threat, the need for robust civic literacy is growing. Civic literacy encompasses the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that individuals require to participate actively in civic life. It encompasses the understanding of democratic principles, civic rights and responsibilities, and the ability to engage in civic activities. Civic literacy is indispensable for the advancement of democratic societies, as it empowers citizens to engage actively in democratic processes and community participation (Flornes, 2017; Semercioglu & Öztürk, 2024).

Different problems, mostly differences in education, have made it clear that we need to work on improving civic literacy. There are significant disparities in civic education, mainly affecting children of color and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These children often receive inferior civic education, leading to a "civic opportunity gap" and a "civic empowerment gap"(Addington, 2016; Lo, 2019). This difference is an example of a bigger social responsibility that comes from systemic imbalances. Second, in the context of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, civic literacy is crucial for navigating digital spaces and combating misinformation. The integration of digital literacy and civic education is crucial for preparing students to tackle contemporary challenges (Nuryadi & Widiatmaka, 2023; Saputri, 2019). Thirdly, taking part in a democracy, Civic literacy is crucial for fostering democratic engagement and participation. Without it, people are less likely to take part in democratic processes, which weakens the overall democratic structure of society (Flornes, 2017).

There is a significant difference in civic literacy, particularly in terms of quality and availability, teaching methods, and teacher training. There are differences in the quality and availability of civic education for different groups of people. Students in urban and low-income areas often get a worse civic education than their wealthier peers (Addington, 2016; Lo, 2019). Strategies for teaching: Traditional methods of teaching civics may not be enough to keep kids interested. Innovative pedagogies, such as service learning, policy

discussion, and flipped classrooms, have shown promise in enhancing civic literacy; however, their remains limited (Leek, 2016; Ma'Ruufah et al., 2023). Getting ready to be a teacher: The effectiveness of civic education significantly depends on the training and preparedness of educators. To help teachers teach civic literacy in various school settings, they need to undergo thorough teacher education programs (Flornes, 2017).

Developing democratic dispositions is a component of civic literacy. It encourages direct interaction with a pluralistic world in educational settings, which includes learning about the global community, practising responsible behaviour, and understanding one's place within a broader community (Wahlström, 2022). Along with knowledge integration, personal growth, and interpersonal interaction skills, this is one of six orientations about learning outcomes (Chen et al., 2023). According to McDiarmid et al (2021), civic literacy refers to the fundamental knowledge, abilities, and dispositions that individuals need to participate in society and support democratic principles and practices

Strategies for Improvement to address these issues, we need to incorporate digital literacy. Improving civic literacy through digital literacy can be highly effective, especially for younger individuals who have grown up with technology. Using digital tools and various teaching methods can make civic education more engaging and effective (Abdulkarim et al., 2018; Nuryadi & Widiatmaka, 2023). Strategies Based on geography, tailoring civic education to specific local contexts and circumstances can enhance its relevance and effectiveness. This method promotes fairness by meeting the specific needs of children in different settings (Demsky-Cohen & Cohen, 2024). Learning together, encouraging collaborative and participatory educational experiences can improve civic literacy. Programs that engage students in real-world civic activities and discussions about current events have been effective (Lo, 2019; Römer et al., 2023; Saputri, 2019).

A variety of issues, including low political engagement among young poepole, intolerance, and radicalism, underscore the need for civic literacy awareness to safeguard the integrity of democracy. Nonetheless, empirical investigations into civic literacy are still relatively scarce. To date, there has been no comprehensive map of civic literacy research trends at the global or national level. Consequently, a study that combines bibliometric methodologies with a systematic literature review is essential to clarify the research landscape in this domain. This study enhances the theoretical framework of civic literacy by systematically delineating the evolution of concepts, pedagogical approaches, and emerging challenges within the field. The research employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to discern patterns, trends, and deficiencies in the existing scholarship, which often appears fragmented and lacks cohesive analysis. The findings establish a foundation for refining existing theories or developing novel conceptual frameworks, particularly concerning the demands of the digital era and Society 5.0. This work fosters interdisciplinary connections among civic education, digital literacy, character education, and critical pedagogy, thereby enriching the theoretical discourse on civic engagement in contemporary contexts.

Practically, this study provides valuable insights grounded in evidence for key stakeholders in the field of education, including educators, curriculum designers, policymakers, and institutions involved in teacher training. The results provide a significant foundation for developing civic education strategies that are more pertinent, inclusive, and transformative. This study highlights effective practices and common challenges in implementing civic literacy, thereby aiding in the advancement of enhanced teaching methods, professional development initiatives, and policy frameworks that foster civic engagement in various educational settings. Furthermore, the findings of this systematic literature review inform the development of civic education models that incorporate technology and are more attuned to the requirements of digital-native learners.

METHOD

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) represents a methodical and organized approach to evaluating existing research aimed at addressing particular research inquiries. The process entails a thorough and systematic approach to identify, assess, and integrate all pertinent studies on a specific subject (Fundoni et al., 2023; Višić, 2022). An SLR aims to systematically outline the current advancements in a specific research domain, offering a structured and comprehensive summary of existing knowledge that can underpin subsequent research efforts (Fundoni et al., 2023). A bibliometric approach, incorporating a systematic literature review, objectively evaluates literature trends to identify significant patterns, advancements, and research entities within a discipline. The PRISMA framework is employed to ensure a comprehensive and reproducible literature screening process, offering a clear and transparent summary of the topic being investigated (Chotisarn & Phuthong, 2025).

The following are the standards for this bibliometric analysis: (1) Articles published before September 16, 2025; (2) Publications written in English; and (3) A focus on civic literacy. The bibliometric analysis involves examining citations, author networks, and co-occuring keywords. The integration of bibliometric

methodologies with systematic literature reviews enables researchers to synthesize empirical findings and map the research landscape, including the identification of key contributors and emerging trends (Ni & Abdullah, 2025).

The preliminary phase of the review process involves selecting keywords, employing a macro-level (top-down) approach that begins with broad search trajectories and progressively refines to more specialized studies and subjects. Upon assessing the constraints of prior research and the relative dearth of studies on civic literacy, the researcher emphasized Civic Literacy as the primary focus in article titles, abstracts, and keyword sections. The Scopus database was employed for multiple investigative objectives, including literature evaluation, material identification, and monitoring research trends. This study employed VOSviewer as an analytical tool to visualize articles based on linkages, overall link strength, occurrences, and publication year. Furthermore, Microsoft Excel and CSV files were employed to streamline data extraction (Mariani et al., 2025).
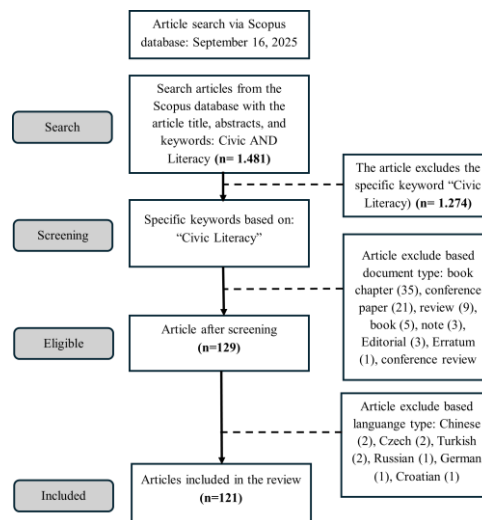
Source: Processed by researchers, 2025
Figure 1. Systematic Literature Review information flow using PRISMA

A search of the Scopus database on September 16, 2025, using the terms "Citizenship and Literacy" in article titles, abstracts, and keywords from 1980 to 2025 across various academic fields yielded 1,484 documents related to civic literacy (see Figure 1). Then, a screening process was implemented to categorize and filter the documents by type. There were 78 publications in total: 35 book chapters, 21 conference papers, 9 reviews, 5 books, 3 notes, 3 editorials, 1 erratum, and 1 conference review. After screening and sorting the documents by type, the final selection resulted in 124 relevant articles. This material is subsequently examined in this study to address RQ1: Does the exploration of Civic Literacy remain a pertinent subject for future academic investigation? RQ2: What is the current distribution of research studies about Civic Literacy? RQ3: What are the theoretical and practical ramifications for future research?

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There have been 1,481 publications on literacy and citizenship since 1980 as of September 16, 2025. This number encompasses a wide range of publications, including articles, book chapters, conference papers, reviews, books, notes, editorials, errata, and conference proceedings. There are 210 publications on civic literacy, with 132 pieces. There are 121 articles in English, and the rest are in various languages, including Chinese, Czech, Turkish, Russian, German, and Croatia. The findings of this study are derived from data collected from 121 publications sourced from Scopus about civic literacy. We obtained the numbers by counting the number of published articles, tracking of publications over the years, and identifying the journals from which they originated. The study also discusses the most important aspects, such as the authors, their connections, and their backgrounds.

Trends in Publication

Figure 2 show that data from Scopus indicate that there have been few publications on civic literacy over the past four decades. Over the past decade, the number of scholarly articles on civic literacy has steadily increased. In 2010, there were four articles, in 2012 there were seven, in 2018 there were nine, in 2021 there were ten, and in 2014 and 2015 there were fourteen articles each, as shown in Figure 2 below.
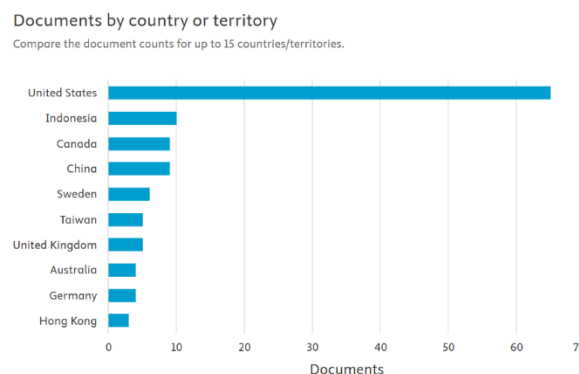
Documents by year
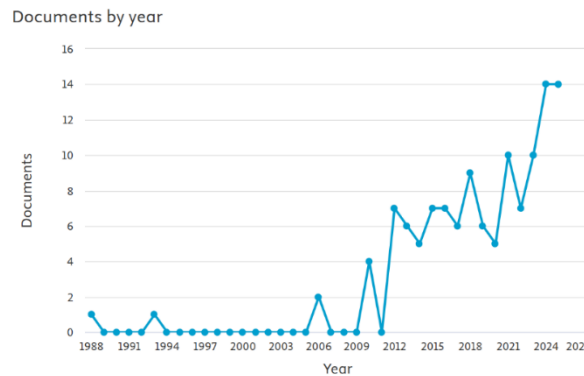
Source: Scopus database
Figure 2. Number of Civic Literacy publications

Research on civic literacy has become increasingly intense over time. The available figures indicate that from 1988 to the early 2000s, the number of studies in this field was limited, with some years showing no publications at all. This situation illustrates that civic literacy had not yet become a primary study emphasis at that period. Between 2009 and 2025, there was a clear increase in the number of articles. This suggests that civic literacy is becoming a significant topic of discussion in academia. This aligns with the advancement of global discourse on participatory democracy, essential to 21st-century education, and the imperative to address the challenges of the digital era, including misinformation, reduced political engagement among youth, intolerance, radicalism, and various other civic concerns.

The academic community perceives this tendency as a transformation in research paradigms. Civic literacy is now recognized not only as the fundamental ability to comprehend civic principles but has transformed into a multifaceted term that includes critical skills, digital engagement, and the enhancement of both local and global civic identity. This certainly creates ample opportunity for the advancement of contextual research, particularly in Indonesia, which faces concerns regarding digital literacy, religious moderation, and the reinforcement of Pancasila ideals. The publication data, which continues to expand, signifies an increasing and evolving significance. Moreover, it highlights an apparent necessity within the academic sphere to prioritize civic literacy as a strategic area of research, particularly in relation to education, democracy, and community development. This will create opportunities for future researchers to tackle existing gaps. This research aims to enhance the understanding of the practical and sustainable applications of civic literacy across various sectors.

National Affiliate Trend

Figure 3 shows that the United States has the most articles on civic literacy among the top 10 countries, with 65 articles. This is a lot more than any other country. Indonesia has 10 articles, Canada has 9, Sweden has 6, Taiwan and the UK each have 5, China has 4, and Germany and Hong Kong each have 3.

Documents by country or territory
Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.


Source: Scopus database
Figure 3. Number of articles by country or territory (top 10 countries)

This distribution reveals a significant difference in geography, with the United States positioned centrally and other countries represented on a smaller scale. The U.S. supremacy means that civic literacy is now a key part of the country's research agenda and educational policy priorities. The data indicate that civic literacy is emerging as a significant research topic in Indonesia, ranking second. The gap with the United States remains wide, so it is essential to strengthen international research collaborations to make civic literacy studies from Indonesia more visible and have a greater impact globally. Altough Indonesia has only

published a few books, coming in second place gives them a great opportunity to make civic literacy a distinctive contribution to international debate, grounded in the ideas of Pancasila, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, and constitutional democracy. Future research on civic literacy could be improved through multidisciplinary approaches, such as linking it to challenges in digital literacy. International cooperation is necessary to enhance the global recognition of Indonesian scholarship.

The researchers analyzed international relationships in civic literacy studies using the VOSviewer software. As shown in Figure 4 below, this step is crucial for creating a research plan that is well-organized and forward-looking.
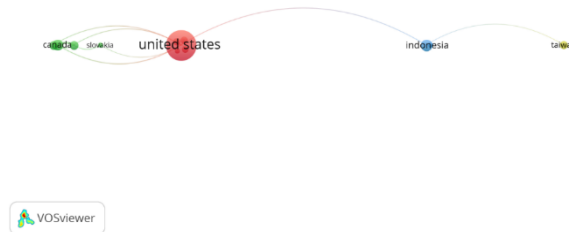
Source: Output VOSViewer software
Figure 4. Network country visualiation

The image above illustrates a network visualization that demonstrates how countries interact with one another through publications and research collaborations in civic literacy. The size of each circle indicates the number of publications, and the lines connecting them represent the level of collaboration between countries. The picture shows that the United States is the most significant and most important node, with a total link strength of 24. Other countries, like Canada, Slovakia, Indonesia, and Taiwan, follow. The links in the picture illustrate limitations within the network, resulting in small and sparse clusters.

The United States, as the primary location for collaboration, supports the earlier conclusion that it is the largest publisher of books on civic literacy. The United States maintains direct relations with Canada and Slovakia, thereby augmenting the influence of U.S. research on the global research agenda. Indonesia serves as a distinctive hub directly linked to the United States and Taiwan. This means that, despite the limited number of Indonesian publications, they are already part of the international collaborative network. The link to Taiwan demonstrates that countries in Asia are collaborating, while the link to the United States indicates that Indonesia is part of global research networks. Still, Indonesia's node is significantly smaller than the U.S. node, indicating that more collaboration and increased publishing output are necessary. The sparse network indicates that research on civic literacy is disjointed due to inadequate cross-national collaboration.

Co-Occurance

The VOSviewer tool enable researchers to examine publishing trends by analyzing the keywords associated with each published scientific article. This tool helps researchers identify promising areas for future study by analyzing trends, which enables them to determine which issues require further investigation. Using VOSviewer, we analyzed data from the Scopus database to identify the most common keywords in the documents examined (Mariani et al., 2025). The literature on civic literacy revealed seventy-two keywords. We categorized these 72 keywords into several different groups. The ten most common keywords, with civic literacy as the most important one, are: human, humans, adult, qualitative study, female, literacy, civic engagement, article, and male. You can see them in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Occurance of Keywords

No	Keyword	Occurances	Total Link Strength
1	Civic literacy	35	**84**
2	Human	8	**70**
3	Humans	5	**49**
4	Adult	5	**48**
5	Qualitative research	6	**44**
6	Female	4	**42**

7	Literacy	12	**37**
8	Civic engagement	12	**36**
9	Article	4	**35**
10	Male	3	35

Figure 5 illustrates that "civic literacy" is a crucial component of the network, closely linked to other significant topics, including citizenship education, civic engagement, literacy, qualitative research, social media, and health literacy. Figure 5 shows several clusters. The blue cluster in the middle includes terms such as civic literacy, literacy, citizenship education, social media, civics instruction, and numeracy. This group shows a strong connection between civic literacy, formal education, curriculum-based learning, and digital literacy. This group views civic literacy as a crucial skill for education in the 21st century and acknowledges social media as a new means for people to engage with their communities.

The green cluster focuses on concerns about democracy, misinformation, and global threats. It demonstrates how civic literacy is connected to global issues such as digital democracy, climate change, and the threat of authoritarianism. Civic literacy should be regarded not merely as a local competency but also as an expression of global citizenship capable of addressing international issues. The red cluster shows health and gender issues. This group demonstrates that civic literacy is integral to public health and gender studies, making it a field that transcends disciplines and is closely linked to health-related issues, particularly citizens' rights and gender equality. The last cluster, which is purple, focuses on the arts and creative education. This focus, although small, suggest a growing connection between civic literacy and innovative approaches, such as the arts and arts-based education.
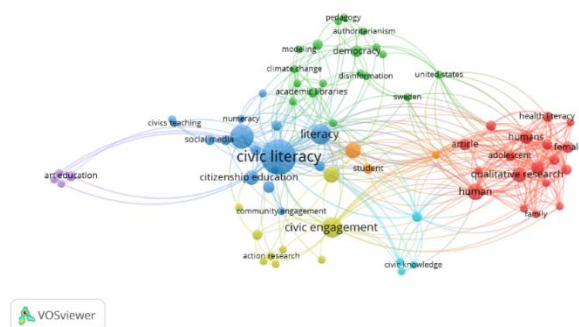
Source: Output VOSViewer software
Figure 5. Co-occurance framework and depiction of essential terminology

The picture illustrates that civic literacy is not only taught in schools, but is also connected to other areas, including health, gender, global issues, and the arts. The emergence of the terms "social media" and "misinformation" underscores the importance of civic literacy in the digital era, particularly for combating hoaxes and maintaining democratic integrity. Civic literacy is demonstrated by the level of involvement people have in public affairs, as evidenced by the rise of terms such as civic engagement and community engagement.

Implication of Research Findings

The findings of this study have considerable theoretical and practical implications. Cluster analysis suggests that civic literacy is a multifaceted construct that intersects with education, technology, the social sciences, and contemporary global challenges. This aligns with previous research, which demonstrates that civic literacy encompasses political knowledge, digital competencies, and democratic principles. This research highlights that civic literacy is closely tied to various competencies, including media literacy, health literacy, and a culture of engagement. Furthermore, the analysis of publishing trends reveals a shift in research focus towards novel topics such as citizen engagement in the post-2020 era, which is pertinent to the evolution of twenty-first-century citizenship theory.

These results underscore the imperative for educational programs that emphasize civic literacy within the curriculum. The dominance of U.S.-based research suggests that global best practices can be adapted to local contexts, exemplified by the integration of digital literacy and civic education into formal schooling in Indonesia. The growing emphasis on global issues like climate change and digital democracy requires collaboration across sectors, education, health, and technology, to transform civic literacy into

comprehensive training programs. The findings highlight the need for further inquiry, particularly to rectify current shortcomings, such as exploring effective methods for integrating civic literacy in the digital era or assessing the effectiveness of arts-based interventions in promoting civic values. This review provides a framework for scholars to guide future research toward more contextually relevant and application-oriented pathways.

CONCLUSION

This paper conducts a comprehensive literature review and bibliometric analysis of civic literacy studies using the Scopus database up to 2025. The findings indicate a notable surge in interest in civic literacy commencing in the late 2000s, paralleling a rise in publications concerning global issues such as disinformation and participatory democracy. The United States is the largest publisher of books, but Indonesia is growing rapidly and has now surpassed it to tkae second place. An examination of collaboration networks highlights the need to strengthen international research relationships, particularly to enhance Indonesia's position within global networks. Civic literacy encompasses various areas, including formal education, digital literacy, health, gender, and the arts, as a means to educate people about their civic responsibilities. These results underscore civic literacy as a crucial transdisciplinary skill in contemporary society.

Civic literacy is an increasingly relevant and essential field of study. The rise in publications and the range of study subjects indicate substantial opportunities for further academic progress. Future research may focus on enhancing digital civic literacy, expanding interdisciplinary collaborations, and promoting practical applications in curriculum and public policy. The expectation is that a better understanding of civic literacy will enable people to navigate democratic issues in the information age. This review seeks to lay the groundwork for more extensive and contextually pertinent research, particularly regarding the imperative for civic education that adapts to contemporary development.

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