Civic Education in the 21st Century: A Bibliometric Analysis of Scholarly Trends

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to analyze the evolving landscape of civic education in the 21st century through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scholarly trends. VOSviewer was utilized for its ability to effectively visualize data in the form of maps. The analysis focuses on two key aspects: trends in research based on keywords, titles, and abstracts, and the geographical distribution of research activity across countries. The results highlight the top five countries leading in civic education research: the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Spain, with Indonesia ranked 32nd. The findings emphasize the need for continued development in civic education policies and practices globally, particularly addressing disparities in lower-ranked countries. This study contributes to understanding how civic education can be effectively implemented and researched, offering insights for policymakers and educators to strengthen civic education systems worldwide. The practical implications of these findings suggest that policymakers and educators can leverage these insights to design civic education programs that are both contextually relevant and capable of bridging existing educational gaps.

INTRODUCTION

Civic education plays a pivotal role in preparing citizens to actively engage in democratic processes and address contemporary global challenges (Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Rebecca Winthrop, 2020; Stambaugh & Little, 2021). In the 21st century, its significance has been amplified as societies confront complex issues such as digital transformation, political polarization, and social inequality (Hensmans, 2021; Lo et al., 2022). Preparing citizens to effectively navigate these challenges is essential for sustaining democratic institutions and fostering social cohesion (Bargués & Morillas, 2021; Harris & Johns, 2021; Hendriks & Dzur, 2022). The urgency to reevaluate and enhance civic education programs has become increasingly evident in light of the rapid technological advancements that profoundly influence how citizens access information and engage in civic life.

Despite its growing recognition, civic education remains an underexplored area in academic research (Haduong et al., 2024; Payne et al., 2020; Santoso, 2021), particularly within the context of contemporary societal transformations (Alscher et al., 2022; Bramwell, 2020; Clay & Rubin, 2020). Existing studies

have predominantly focused on traditional approaches to civic education (Bowyer & Kahne, 2020), often overlooking the implications of digital media and the increasing interconnectedness of global societies (Franch, 2020; Shaw, 2023; Yanniris, 2021). This gap in the literature underscores the need for a comprehensive analysis that integrates recent advancements, offering a holistic perspective on current trends in civic education research.

This study seeks to address the existing research gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of scholarly publications on civic education from the early 21st century to the present. Through a systematic examination of the research bibliography, this study provides a novel perspective on the evolution of civic education in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. The bibliometric approach facilitates the identification of key themes, influential authors, and leading journals, offering a comprehensive mapping of the intellectual landscape in this field (Y. Li et al., 2023; Rejeb et al., 2023; M. Trinidad et al., 2021).

The findings of this study hold substantial implications for both educational research and practice. By identifying the most influential research trends and pinpointing areas that require further investigation, this analysis provides valuable insights to inform the development of more effective civic education programs. Additionally, it offers guidance for policymakers in formulating educational policies that enhance citizens' preparedness for active participation in democratic processes and global citizenship.

In conclusion, this study not only addresses a critical gap in the literature but also contributes to the broader discourse on educational innovation and reform. By offering a detailed and nuanced understanding of the current state of civic education research, it provides a valuable resource for educators, researchers, and policymakers striving to enhance the quality and relevance of civic education in the 21st century.

METHOD

This study employs bibliometric analysis to systematically evaluate scholarly trends in civic education during the 21st century (Donthu et al., 2021; Moral-muñoz et al., 2020; Mukherjee et al., 2022). Various tools are available for bibliometric analysis, including CRExplorer, Publish or Perish, ScientoPyUI, NVIVO, and VOSviewer (Moral-muñoz et al., 2020). For this study, VOSviewer software was utilized (Bukar et al., 2023). Bibliographic data were collected by downloading article bibliographies directly from the Scopus database. VOSviewer was selected due to its capability to visually represent data through clear and comprehensive mapping (Juandi & Tamur, 2021; Kirby, 2023). Additionally, the software can efficiently manage large datasets, making it well-suited for extensive bibliometric analyses (Jia & Mustafa, 2023; Kuzior & Sira, 2022; Tamala et al., 2022). Its free availability further enhances its utility for research applications.

The methods section is divided into several key components: data collection, data processing, and analysis. The research stage is illustrated in detail in Figure 1. The data was downloaded in RIS format and processed using VOSviewer software for map-based analysis. The criteria for data collection are outlined in Figure 1. This method ensured the accurate extraction and visualization of trends and relationships within the field.
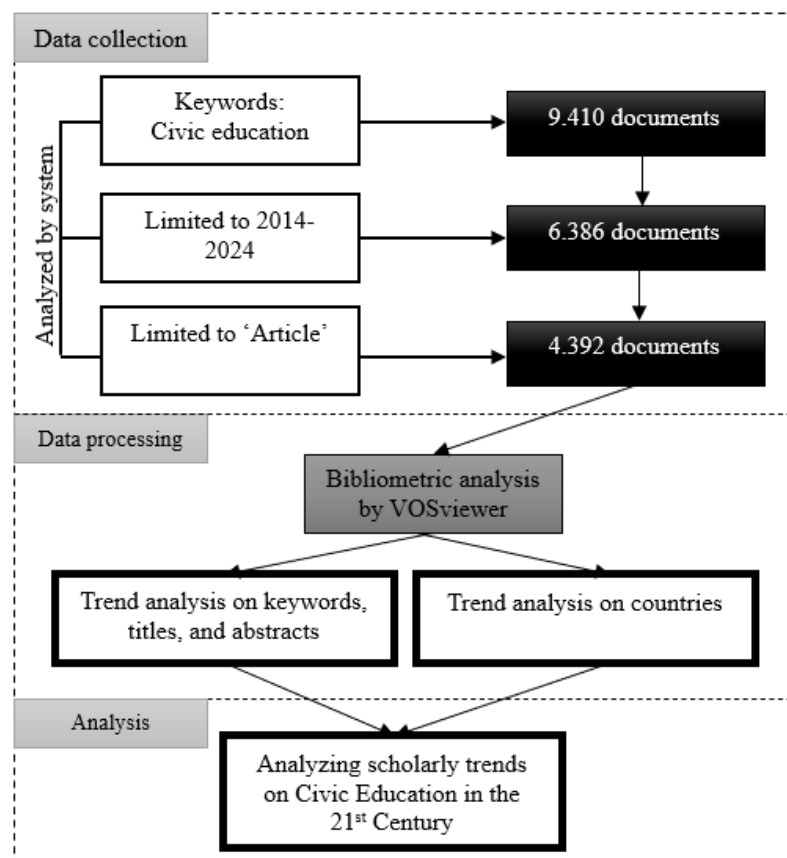
Figure 1. Research Stage.

Data Collection

Data for this bibliometric analysis were retrieved from the Scopus database, selected for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journal articles and robust citation tracking capabilities. The search was conducted using the keyword "civic education" to ensure comprehensive inclusion of relevant literature. The timeframe was limited to publications from 2014 to 2024, focusing on trends within the 21st century. Additionally, the analysis was restricted to journal articles published in Scopus-indexed journals, excluding proceedings, book series, and reviews to maintain a focus on primary research outcomes.

Data Processing

Following the initial search, the retrieved records underwent a rigorous filtering process to ensure relevance and quality. The filtered data were then processed using bibliometric analysis facilitated by VOSviewer software. The results are presented in two types of visual maps: the first map illustrates trend analyses based on keywords, titles, and abstracts, while the second map highlights the countries with the highest research activity related to civic education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Bibliometric Trend Maps

These maps visualize research trends related to "Civic Education" by analyzing keywords, titles, and abstracts. This approach enables the identification of key themes, emerging issues, and the evolution of scholarly focus over time. The visualization results of these trends are presented in Figure 2, illustrating the progression and areas of concentration in civic education research.
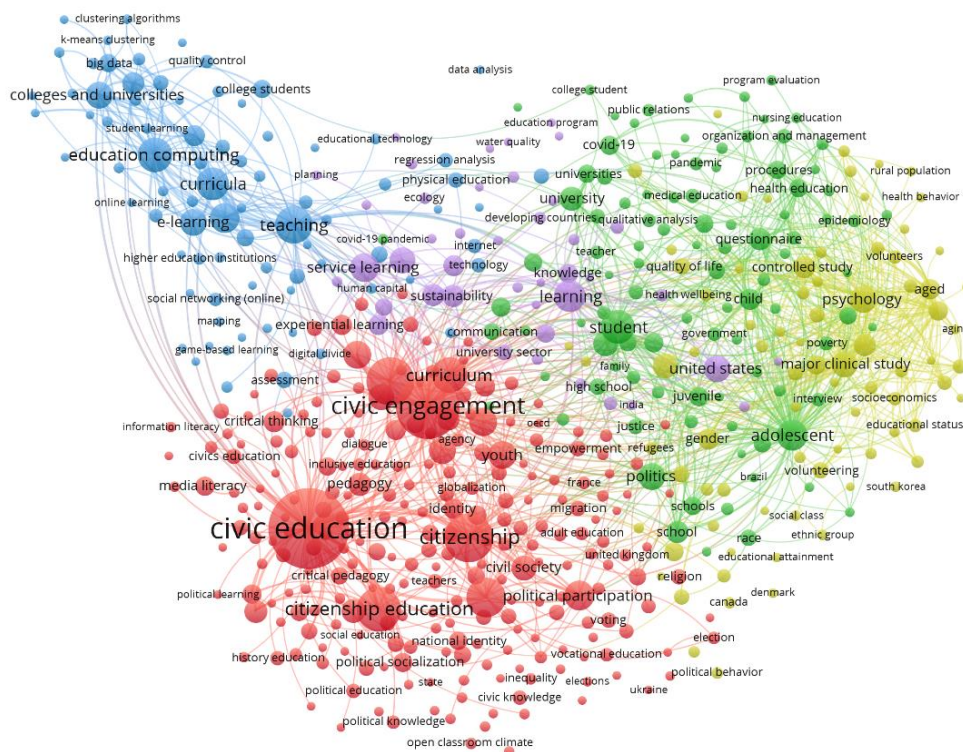
Figure 2. Trend Analysis.

The trend analysis maps reveal several prominent keywords in the field of civic education research, including *civic engagement, civic education, student, major clinical study, psychology, teaching and learning, citizenship, young adult, controlled study,* and others. Examining the relationships among these keywords provides valuable insights into the evolving focus of research in this area.

Civic engagement emerges as a central concept in civic education, reflecting individuals' active participation in democratic processes and community activities (Schulz et al., 2023; Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020). The theory of civic engagement highlights the critical role of active participation in fostering democratic values and social responsibility (Ajaps & Obiagu, 2020; Skarmeas et al., 2020). Empirical research demonstrates that involvement in civic activities enhances individuals' sense of community and civic responsibility (Dang et al., 2022; Procentese & Gatti, 2022). The prominence of this keyword

underscores a strong research focus on understanding how civic education shapes students' engagement with community and societal issues.

The term *"student"* is strongly connected with most other keywords, underscoring the emphasis on the impact of civic education on learners. Educational research frequently focuses on student outcomes and experiences, and the prominence of this keyword reflects a significant interest in understanding how various components of civic education influence students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to civic participation (Haduong et al., 2024).

The keyword *"major clinical study"* suggests a methodological focus on rigorous, clinical research designs (Konstantopoulou et al., 2020), particularly in evaluating civic education interventions. These studies often involve controlled experiments and longitudinal research to assess the effectiveness of educational programs (Kaufman, 2021). The presence of this keyword indicates a

growing trend toward evidence-based approaches in evaluating civic education programs, aiming to generate robust data that can inform and support best practices in education.

Psychology plays a crucial role in understanding the cognitive and emotional dimensions of civic education (Coelho & Menezes, 2021; E. Finkel et al., 2024; Haduong et al., 2024; Pangalila et al., 2020). From a psychological perspective, civic education examines how cognitive development, motivation, and emotional factors shape civic attitudes and behaviors (Haduong et al., 2024). The inclusion of psychological insights highlights a growing interest in understanding how these factors contribute to students' civic development and engagement, providing a deeper comprehension of the mechanisms driving effective civic education.

The keyword *"teaching and learning"* is directly associated with pedagogical approaches within civic education. Teaching and learning theories focus on the methods and strategies employed to deliver civic knowledge and develop civic skills. The prominence of this keyword highlights a significant emphasis on effective pedagogical techniques and their influence on students' understanding and engagement in civic activities (J. E. Trinidad et al., 2020; Tursunboyevich, 2021).

Citizenship represents the ultimate objective of civic education, aimed at preparing informed and responsible individuals. In civic education theories, the concept of citizenship involves cultivating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective participation in democratic societies (Kaumba et al., 2020). The frequent occurrence of this keyword highlights the primary goal of civic education: fostering active and informed citizenship.

Young adult pertains to the demographic focus of civic education research, emphasizing the impact of civic education on this age group. Research on young adults in civic education aims to examine how educational experiences influence civic attitudes and behaviors during critical developmental stages. This focus is grounded in developmental theories that explore how young adults form civic identities and engage with societal issues (Brady et al., 2020; Wilf & Wray-Lake, 2024).

Controlled studies play a vital role in ensuring the reliability and generalizability of findings in educational research. The emphasis on controlled studies reflects a commitment to methodological rigor, aiming to provide clear and actionable insights into the effectiveness of civic education interventions.

Overview of Geographical Research Activity Maps

This study also presents Geographical Research Activity Maps, highlighting the global distribution of research activities and identifying the leading countries in civic education research. The top five countries contributing the most to this field are the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Spain, while Indonesia is ranked 32nd. A detailed visualization of this distribution is shown in Figure 3. Additionally, Table 1 provides a comprehensive list of the top 35 countries with the highest total link strength scores in publications associated with the keywords "Civic Education."
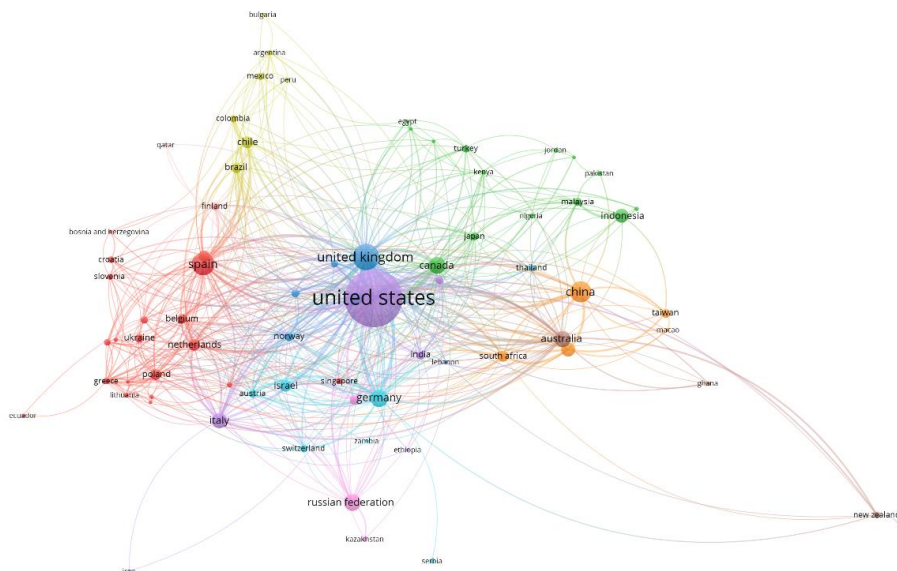
Figure 3. Geographical Research Activity Maps.

Table 1. Top 35 Rank of Countries With the Highest Total Link Strength in Civic Education Research.

No	Country	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
1	United States	2344	12623	367
2	United Kingdom	503	4445	319
3	Germany	230	1453	140
4	Australia	187	2039	118
5	Spain	369	2097	117
6	Canada	210	1744	116
7	Italy	169	1192	102
8	Netherlands	103	1291	77
9	China	330	600	75
10	Hong Kong	142	1141	68
11	Sweden	109	1028	63
12	France	72	635	60
13	Norway	55	249	55
14	Chile	96	616	54
15	Belgium	64	979	52
16	Greece	32	235	50
17	South Africa	90	539	50
18	Austria	42	496	49
19	Portugal	91	417	46
20	Israel	105	695	44
21	Denmark	45	290	42
22	Poand	83	205	41
23	Brazil	79	274	38
24	Finland	47	272	38
25	India	61	308	38
26	South Korea	51	415	38
27	Japan	47	440	37
28	Russian Federation	198	513	37
29	Ireland	44	353	34
30	Malaysia	46	340	30
31	Switzerland	44	361	30
32	Indonesia	141	632	24
33	Colombia	40	162	23
34	Taiwan	57	452	22
35	Lithuania	16	18	20

In VOSviewer, *"total link strength"* refers to the cumulative strength of connections (or links) between an item—such as a keyword, author, or country—and other items within the network (Huang et al., 2022; W. H. Li et al., 2022; Mostafa Hatami et al., 2021). Each link possesses a specific strength, which indicates the level of association or co-occurrence between two items. The total link strength of an item is the aggregate of the strengths of all its links, representing its overall connectedness and significance within the network. In bibliometric analysis, a high total link strength for a country suggests frequent co-occurrence with numerous other items, signifying its central role within the research network.

Based on the data presented in Figure 3 and Table 1, the United States emerges as the leading country in civic education research, followed by the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Spain. In comparison, Indonesia is ranked 32nd. An analysis of the civic education policies in these five leading countries, when juxtaposed with those in Indonesia, reveals several notable differences.

Civic Education in United States

In the United States, civic education is emphasized as an integral part of broader educational standards, embedded within subjects such as social studies and history (Haduong et al., 2024). The focus is on preparing students for active citizenship by fostering an understanding of democratic principles, rights, and responsibilities. National programs, such as the Civic Education Program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, support research and development in this field (Pangalila et al., 2020). During the learning process, teachers frequently incorporate discussions on constitutional rights, the structure of government, and

public policy issues to enhance students' civic knowledge and engagement.

The United Kingdom incorporates civic education into the National Curriculum under *"Citizenship Education,"* aiming to provide students with knowledge of the legal and political systems and the skills needed to engage in democratic processes (Arizka, 2020; Jerome et al., 2022). Initiatives such as the Citizenship Foundation offer resources and support to schools for implementing effective civic education programs. The curriculum emphasizes democratic participation, social responsibility, and an understanding of the UK's role within the global community (Jerome et al., 2022).

Civic Education in Germany

In Germany, civic education is integrated into the curriculum under the subject *"Politics and Society"* (Wagner, 2022; Wagner & Kössler, 2022). The program emphasizes democratic values, human rights, and the role of individuals within society. The German government actively supports civic education through initiatives such as the *"Federal Agency for Civic Education,"* which provides educational materials and organizes events (Wagner, 2022). The curriculum also includes comprehensive studies of Germany's democratic institutions and historical development (Wagner & Kössler, 2022).

Civic Education in Australia

In Australia, civic education is integrated into the *"Civics and Citizenship"* component of the National Curriculum, emphasizing an understanding of democratic processes, legal systems, and civic responsibilities (Butler, 2021; Fozdar & Martin, 2020; Neoh, 2021). Initiatives such as the *"Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship"* aim to cultivate informed and active citizenship (Butler, 2021;

Fozdar & Martin, 2020). The curriculum focuses on the role of citizens in a democratic society, including a comprehensive understanding of Australian history, government, and legal systems.

Civic Education in Spain

In Spain, civic education is incorporated into the curriculum under *"Education for Citizenship and Human Rights"* (Sánchez-Agustí & Miguel-Revilla, 2020). The program focuses on fostering democratic values, human rights, and social responsibility. Various regional initiatives support civic education, with the Spanish government providing guidelines for its implementation (Flores-Tapia et al., 2022). The curriculum highlights the importance of democratic values, human rights, and the individual's role in promoting social justice (Fuentes-Moreno et al., 2020).

Civic Education in Indonesia

In Indonesia, civic education is integrated into the *"Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan"* (Citizenship Education) curriculum, emphasizing national identity, democratic principles, and social responsibilities (Santoso, 2020). While various programs aim to promote civic education, their implementation is often constrained by resource limitations and operational challenges (Hidayah et al., 2020). Civic education in Indonesia highlights the principles of responsible citizenship, where individuals possess both rights and duties within the state. Legislative regulations, such as Articles 37 (1) and (2) of Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003, reinforce the importance of civic education (Seeth, 2021). The curriculum further emphasizes national unity, the Pancasila ideology, and the role of citizens in contributing to national development.

Based on the analysis, the top five countries exhibit more comprehensive and integrated civic education curricula compared to Indonesia, which often encounters challenges in implementation and resource allocation. In these leading countries, civic education benefits from substantial government support and funding, while in Indonesia, efforts are frequently constrained by budgetary limitations and shifting political priorities.

The curricula in the top-ranked countries emphasize democratic engagement and global citizenship, whereas Indonesia focuses on national identity and unity, reflecting distinct historical and cultural contexts. The availability of resources and support programs in the leading countries significantly enhances the effectiveness of their civic education initiatives. Improving these factors in Indonesia could strengthen its research standing and educational outcomes.

Recent trends in civic education significantly impact existing educational theories by emphasizing the integration of digital literacy, critical thinking, and global citizenship into traditional frameworks. As educational landscapes evolve with technological advancements and increased interconnectedness, theories such as experiential learning and critical pedagogy are being reinterpreted and expanded to incorporate these contemporary elements.

The focus on participatory learning and active citizenship, for example, aligns with experiential learning principles but now includes digital platforms as spaces for engagement and reflection. Similarly, the emphasis on critical consciousness is enhanced by the need for students to critically navigate and analyze information in an increasingly digital world. These trends not only reaffirm the importance of these foundational theories but also call for their adaptation to address the skills and competencies required in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

This study's comprehensive bibliometric analysis sheds light on the dynamic landscape of civic education research in the 21st century. By leveraging the capabilities of VOSviewer, the research visualizes key trends in keywords, titles, and abstracts, and maps the geographical distribution of research activity. The findings reveal that the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Spain are at the forefront of civic education research, while Indonesia ranks 32nd. These insights highlight the necessity for ongoing development and refinement of civic education policies and practices globally, especially to bridge the gaps identified in lower-ranked countries. The study provides valuable information for policymakers and educators, offering guidance on enhancing the implementation and effectiveness of civic education systems. By addressing these disparities, there is an opportunity to strengthen civic education and better prepare students for active and informed citizenship worldwide. The practical implications of these findings indicate that policymakers and educators can utilize these insights to design civic education programs that are contextually relevant and address existing educational gaps.

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