



TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION MODEL: RECONSTRUCTING DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP THROUGH UNIVERSITY-PESANTREN SYNERGY

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Abstract: This study aims to reconstruct civic education in Indonesian student Islamic boarding schools through the development of a Transformative Citizenship Formation Model that explains how democratic citizenship is formed through the interaction between higher education and the pesantren environment. Using Constructivist Grounded Theory, this research was conducted at the Rahmadiyah Islamic Boarding School in Semarang, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight participants and participant observations, then analyzed through iterative coding, constant comparison, and theoretical integration based on Charmaz's constructivist approach. The findings of the study reveal that civic education is not formed through academic or religious spaces separately, but is reconstructed through a continuous negotiation process between the academic experience at UIN Walisongo Semarang and the formation of character in pesantren life. This process forms three main transformations: the integration of civic education through the synergy of universities-Islamic boarding schools, the negotiation of democratic citizenship in the two educational ecologies, and the transformation of Islamic-democratic values into Muslimah civic agency which is reflected in leadership, social participation, and community service. These findings contribute to building the idea that pesantren is not only a space for the reproduction of religious values, but also a space for the production of democratic citizenship through the encounter between faith, knowledge, and social responsibility. This study offers a Transformative Citizenship Formation Model to explain the process

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INTRODUCTION

Since entering the 21st century, the complexity of democratic life has continued to rise. Existing studies have sorted out five core challenges facing current democratic systems: deepening political polarization, falling citizen participation rates, rampant misinformation, growing identity tensions, and weakening social trust. This series of shifts has fully exposed the core limitations of traditional citizenship education (Hadi, Idrus, & Sulistiyo, 2026). Past citizenship education only focused on imparting constitutional knowledge, basic political literacy, and civic skills; in recent years, numerous studies have pushed for its transformation into a broad process of democratic cultivation, centered on building the capacity for negotiation across diverse identities and responsible participation in a pluralistic society (Button, 2018). Research on transformative citizenship education further argues that civic learning is an ethical, social, and experiential practice, which must be implemented through dialogue, participation, and alignment with real local communities, rather than being a one-way process of passing on intellectual knowledge.

As a result, the overall paradigm of citizenship education has shifted from a curriculum-centered model to a relational, context-specific cultivation framework, and educational environments have become a core space for fostering democratic literacy (Hasan, 2025). For religious social contexts, emerging research has overturned the long-held outdated view that religion and democracy are mutually exclusive. It points out that educational institutions with religious backgrounds can serve as valid spaces for cultivating citizenship, and can foster moral responsibility, social participation awareness, and a democratic orientation through daily practices. This indicates that the reconstruction of citizenship education must prioritize a pluralistic educational ecosystem that integrates democratic civic identity with the realities of religious culture.

Based on this perspective, initial observations at the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School revealed that democratic citizenship education is embedded in the institution's daily educational life, not just limited to formal classroom instruction. Daily interactions between female students, religious advisors, and the university community demonstrate ongoing practices of deliberation, shared decision-making, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. Student-led organizational activities, collaborative religious learning, community service programs, literacy initiatives, and public discussions create opportunities for participants to negotiate differences, express opinions respectfully, and develop leadership through participatory experiences.

At the same time, the pesantren's unique position, comprised of students from diverse disciplinary, cultural, and regional backgrounds, creates a dynamic educational environment in which Islamic values are continually interpreted alongside democratic norms. These observations suggest that democratic citizenship is not only taught as an academic subject but also fostered through the pesantren's institutional culture and everyday social practices, making the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School a highly relevant environment for

examining how democratic citizenship formation is reconstructed within the Islamic higher education community.

In recent years, research on civic education has broken through the boundaries of formal classrooms, expanding civic learning to non-classroom settings such as institutional culture and participatory experiences. Mezirow, (2008) study on transformative learning confirms that factors including reflection, dialogue, collaboration, life experience, and Islamic ethics together support the process of civic identity construction. However, mainstream research still places excessive focus on formal educational institutions such as universities, neglecting alternative educational spaces that integrate academic, cultural, and moral learning. Focusing on pesantren in the field of Islamic education, while existing research has explored their citizenship cultivation pathways that rely on religious learning, community practice, and institutional traditions, most of these studies frame pesantren as independent religious institutions (Ho, Parreñas, & Yeoh, 2025). This line of research has overlooked the ecologically coordinated, university-linked educational pesantren that form integrated educational ecosystems, creating a core research gap in this specialized subfield.

Previous research has accumulated a substantial body of scholarship in the field of Islamic citizenship education, yet multiple core gaps persist at both the theoretical and empirical levels. First, most existing studies treat regular universities and pesantren as independent educational spheres, lacking relevant analysis of citizenship education construction that accounts for interactions between these two types of settings (Wahono, Alami, & Wiratomo, 2025). Second, current research only focuses on the compatibility between Islam and democracy, failing to examine the everyday practical processes through which students reconcile religious faith, academic knowledge, and democratic values across multiple contexts (Ainuri et.al, 2026). Third, prior studies center their analysis solely on civic knowledge, attitudes, and identity, with a lack of research on how these dimensions translate into civic action capacity. In particular, there is a notable lack of relevant discussions focused on the Muslim female population (Nadhif et.al, 2026).

This research aims to reconstruct citizenship education for female Islamic boarding school students through the development of a Transformative Citizenship Formation Model that explains how democratic citizenship is formed through the interaction between higher education and the Islamic boarding school environment. This research selects the Rahmadiyah Islamic Boarding School in Semarang, Indonesia, as its primary case study. Female students at this institution are also enrolled at Walisongo State Islamic University (UIN Walisongo). This setting allows for a comprehensive examination of citizenship formation processes across multiple contexts and directly addresses all of the research gaps outlined above.

This research utilizes constructivist grounded theory, taking the interconnected educational ecosystems formed by universities and Islamic boarding schools as its research setting, and focusing on a group of female Muslim students. This research explores their democratic citizenship formation processes

to reconstruct the core logic of citizenship education. The core of this research unfolds around three interrelated processes: the collaboration between universities and Islamic boarding schools to build an integrated citizenship education framework; the negotiation of democratic citizenship between the two educational ecosystems; and the transformation of religiously rooted democratic citizenship into civic agency among female Muslim students.

Theoretically, this study challenges the limitations of traditional citizenship education, which focuses solely on curriculum delivery and skills development, and proposes a model for transformative citizenship formation. It demonstrates that democratic citizenship in Islamic educational settings is actively constructed, rather than transplanted from external democratic frameworks. Empirically, this study fills a gap in international research on the relationship between these two types of education. Practically, it offers insights for developing inclusive citizenship education pathways and confirms that religious communities can serve as spaces for democratic learning and fostering civic engagement.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) design developed by Charmaz to understand and construct a conceptual model regarding the reconstruction of civic education based on participants' empirical experiences, rather than to test existing theories (Charmaz, 2017). This approach was selected because it allows conceptual categories to emerge inductively through the interaction between the researcher and the participants (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Charmaz, 2016). The research was conducted at the Rahmadiyah University Student Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*) in Semarang, Central Java, utilizing purposive sampling followed by theoretical sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The study involved eight informants, comprising two *asatidz* (religious educators) responsible for educational and character development, and six female university students selected based on the diversity of their academic disciplines, organizational experience, and length of residence at the boarding school (Clarke et al., 2023). Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Glaser, 2012) and participant observation of various educational activities—such as Qur'an instruction, study of classical texts, religious activities, and leadership practices within the boarding school environment (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2017).

Table 1. Informan Profile

No	Initial	Role	Gender	Institution
1	PMR1	<i>Asatidz</i>	Man	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah
2	PMR2	<i>Asatidzah</i>	Women	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah
3	PMR3	<i>Santri/Student</i>	Women	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah
4	PMR4	<i>Santri/Student</i>	Women	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah
5	PMR5	<i>Santri/Student</i>	Women	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah
6	PMR6	<i>Santri/Student</i>	Women	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah
7	PMR7	<i>Santri/Student</i>	Women	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah
8	PMR8	<i>Santri/Student</i>	Women	Pesantren Mahasiswa Rahmadiyah

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection in accordance with the principles of Constructivist Grounded Theory; consequently, the results of each interview and observation were immediately transcribed, coded, compared, and acted upon to refine subsequent data collection efforts. The analysis process proceeded through stages of initial coding, focused coding, and constant comparative analysis, accompanied by the drafting of analytical memos to incrementally develop conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1998; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Khan, 2014). This process yielded four primary categories—Integrated Civic Education, Two Educational Ecologies, Religious Democratic Citizenship, and Muslim Women's Civic Agency—which were subsequently formulated into the Transformative Civic Formation model (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). The credibility of the findings was ensured through methodological triangulation (combining interviews and observations), the application of the constant comparative method, the use of analytical memos, and the researcher's intensive engagement at the research site. Furthermore, the study adhered to ethical principles by obtaining informed consent, guaranteeing the confidentiality of participants' identities, and respecting the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Constructing Integrated Civic Education through University–Pesantren Synergy

The findings of the study show that citizenship education at the Rahmadiyah Semarang Student Islamic Boarding School is built from the process of combining the academic experience of female students with character development that takes place in the pesantren environment through daily life in the pesantren, as shown by the research findings. Different from the civic education model which is better understood as a formal course in higher education, or as the substance of a normative study of the rights and obligations of citizens in society, PKN learning at the Rahmadiyah Islamic Boarding School grows through the process of developing a civic identity that penetrates the space of the broad educational ecosystem. This integration can be seen from the relationship between Pancasila Education studied on campus and various Islamic boarding school activities to foster Islamic values as a moral foundation for the life of the nation.

The attitude of patriotism is not instilled through national slogans, but through study groups that relate prophetic examples in building a society of Medina from scratch to a plural Indonesian way of life, based on the teaching of Promise every Friday which is illustrated through the review of historical passages about the struggle of the Prophet, as well as normative ethical lectures given daily by the caretakers of Islamic boarding schools. In this process, the female students interpret citizenship not as an individual legal status (which is generally negative freedom), but as a sustainable religious mandate that involves the responsibility to maintain unity, respect differences, and be active actors in

community life. Thus, the identity of a student in a pesantren prevents the identity from solely being located as a student at the university; There are no two identities that live intertwined, but two different learning spaces that support each other so that they become the perspective of PKN teachers that are both religious and contextual.

The results of this observation are clear that the integration can be seen in the life of the Islamic boarding school. Regarding the findings of the research, almost all assistance actions are not only taught to strengthen worship, but also taught to prepare for social responsibility in society. For example, when conducting a night study session (recitation) after the Isha prayer, the pesantren leader not only explains the content of the book being studied, but also relates it to the academic experience gained by the students on campus. As students from orphanages but rooted in Islamic boarding schools, pesantren leaders loosely associate the mandate and responsibilities discussed in *Adab al-'Ālim wa al-Muta'allim* as related to academic ethics, honesty in completing lecture assignments, compliance with campus rules (e.g. wearing uniforms or complying with campus regulations), and students as intellectual leaders who are responsible for shaping the wider society.

On the other hand, while reading Promise every Friday night, this researcher found that the stories told about the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad in building the city of Medina were conveyed as an example of how the values of brotherhood, justice, and respect for differences became cornerstones in sharing life. Several other participants, most of whom were students, were also still involved in the discussion of the content of the activities they had participated in during their stay by associating it with what they experienced in the Pancasila Education course and the national discussion forum at UIN Walisongo.

These findings through observation show that life in pesantren functions as a space of reflective exploration that connects academic knowledge with religious experience, so that civic values cannot be stopped at the surface conceptual level, but rather made into a pragmatic routine in daily life. PMR1 Said,

"We always convey to children that being a student does not mean staying away from the life of the nation. In fact, religious knowledge must be a provision when they will live in the community. What is learned on campus, such as Pancasila or citizenship, should not stop as theory. In pesantren we try to connect it with morals, with trust, with responsibility as a Muslim. So they understand that loving Indonesia is also part of practicing Islamic values."

The statement shows that caregivers do not view civic education as a separate domain from Islamic education. On the contrary, the two fields are positioned as two elements that complement each other in shaping the character of female students. This perspective explains why various coaching activities in pesantren are always linked to academic experience in higher education. For caregivers, the success of education is not measured solely by academic achievement and mastery of religious knowledge, but by the ability of female students to integrate the two in social life as ethical, responsible, and able to present Islamic values in the public sphere.

The caregiver's perspective is in line with the experience of female students who feel that life in Islamic boarding schools provides space to reflect on various concepts of citizenship learned while attending lectures at UIN Walisongo. One of the students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program explained that the Pancasila Education course on campus discusses many normative concepts regarding democracy, the rights and obligations of citizens, and national values. However, according to him, this understanding gained a more concrete meaning after being discussed in recitation forums at Islamic boarding schools. He said:

"On campus we learned about Pancasila, democracy, and citizens' rights. At first I understood it as just lecture material that had to be studied for the exam. But when she lived in the Islamic boarding school, Mrs. Nyai often explained that these values had actually been taught in Islam, such as trust, deliberation, respect for others, and maintaining unity. So I began to understand that being a good citizen is also part of practicing religious teachings." (Interview with Santri).

A similar experience was also conveyed by a student of the Constitutional Law Study Program who revealed that communal life in *pesantren* forms a new understanding of citizenship through daily practice. According to him, the division of cleaning duties, deliberation in solving dormitory problems, and involvement in social activities organized by Islamic boarding schools are learning media that are not obtained directly in the lecture hall. He explained that these various activities teach the importance of collective responsibility, concern for others, and respect for the differences in character between students from various regions in Indonesia. The two narratives show that academic experience and *pesantren* life do not run in parallel, but complement each other in shaping students' perspectives on the meaning of being a citizen. The knowledge gained in the lecture hall provides a conceptual framework regarding citizenship, while the life of the *pesantren* provides a praxis space to internalize these values through the experience of living together.

The results obtained show that efforts to reconstruct civic education at the *Pesantren Rahmadiyah* are not carried out by inserting civic education content into the cottage environment, but through the process of integrating learning experiences taken from two different educational environments. The campus is a space to form academic knowledge about democracy, the constitution, human rights, and national values; Then the *pesantren* changed this knowledge as an internalization of moral orientation and social practice. Therefore, the relationship between the campus and the Islamic boarding school is not an administrative relationship that is neatly integrated with each other, but a pedagogical relationship that connects the idea of citizenship with the religious experience of students continuously in daily life.

Negotiating Democratic Citizenship across Two Educational Ecologies

The findings of the study reveal that the negotiation between Islamic values, national identity, and democratic principles at the *Rahmadiyah Semarang Student Boarding School* involves a dynamic interaction between two educational

ecologies: 1) the academic space of UIN Walisongo Semarang, and 2) the religious space of the Islamic boarding school. In contrast to the dichotomous perspective that places higher education and pesantren as two educational systems with conflicting orientations, this study shows how the two spaces can actually co-construct the citizenship of students through complementary relationships. In the academic environment, students have the space and time to learn the entire concept of constitutional democracy, the rights and obligations of citizens in it, freedom of expression, and plural community life through lectures and student organizations. And, on the other hand, there is a space for reflection in the religious space of the pesantren that can present these concepts to be reinterpreted by

Islamic teachings, moral education, and pedagogical spirit that is rooted in the understanding of intellectual traditions that are valuable during the existence of the pesantren as a culture. Therefore, the daily commute of female students from campus to pesantren does not only mark the existence of intermediate physical mobility between the two educational settings; They also capture the transition between two learning ecologies with different epistemological characteristics, educational norms, and behaviors. This interaction creates a dialogue space that allows female students to learn how to engage in civic life as Indonesian Muslim citizens without framing Islamic identity and national identity to oppose each other, but rather as two mutually supportive dimensions.

The observational findings showed that after returning from campus, the students negotiated naturally in some of their daily activities. Based on the results of this study, several female students who attended lectures at UIN Walisongo often reviewed issues obtained in class during evening study sessions or informal discussions in the dormitory or pesantren environment. On several occasions, the discussion shifted from the experience gained in the Pancasila Education course to discussions on constitutional law, human rights and religious moderation as well as the concepts of *shūrā*, justice, and *maslahah* as well as social responsibility in Islam. The researchers also note that Friday night study sessions and activities throughout Ramadan not only involve the transfer of religious materials on different theories, but often develop into discussion forums for issues such as intolerance, ethics in social media, the active role of young people in politics, and whether society should maintain their unity.

Specifically, these arguments are not framed to judge whether a concept has Western or Islamic roots, but rather to how it can be interpreted in a way that is consistent with the concepts contained in the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, and maqāṣid al-syarī'ah. So, the results of this observation show that pesantren is a reflective space to bridge academic reflection and religious values so that the process of forming citizenship can run through a dialogue that takes place continuously and contextually. The PMR4 informant stated,

"We have never forbidden children from discussing democracy, human rights, politics, or national issues that they are learning about on campus. Instead, we encourage them to discuss it in the pesantren so that they have a complete perspective. What they get from lecturers on campus is very important

knowledge, but here we invite them to see how Islam provides an ethical basis for this knowledge. So they do not see religion and the state as two opposing things, but as two mandates that must be carried out at the same time."

The statement shows that caregivers position pesantren not as a space that corrects or replaces the academic knowledge gained by female students in college, but as a dialogue space that provides moral orientation to the various concepts of citizenship they learn. In this perspective, the negotiation process is not interpreted as an effort to choose between Islamic values or democratic values, but as a process of finding common ground that allows the two to develop harmoniously in shaping the way of thinking and acting as citizens. Thus, the relationship between UIN Walisongo and the Rahmadiyah Islamic Boarding School is not competitive, but forms two educational ecologies that interact with each other in developing the understanding of female students' citizenship.

The caregiver's perspective is in line with the experience of female students who interpret life in Islamic boarding schools as a space to reflect on various concepts of citizenship that they have acquired while attending lectures at UIN Walisongo. One of the students of the Constitutional Law Study Program explained that learning about democracy, human rights, and the constitutional system on campus often raises various questions that are then discussed again in recitation forums and conversations with pesantren caregivers. According to him, the process helped him understand that democratic values should not always be seen as concepts derived from the Western tradition, but can be understood through the principles of justice, deliberation, and benefit that have long developed in the Islamic intellectual tradition. PMR3 reveals:

"In class we learn about democracy, citizens' rights, freedom of opinion, and the constitution. Sometimes the question arises, whether all the concepts are in accordance with the teachings of Islam. When we returned to the Islamic boarding school, we often discussed it with Mrs. Nyai. He never said that democracy should be accepted or rejected, but invited us to see the values that exist in it. If there is deliberation, justice, responsibility, and benefit, it means that Islam also teaches the same thing. From there I felt there was no need to oppose the two."

A similar experience was also conveyed by a student of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program who assessed that life in Islamic boarding schools formed a habit to look at every national issue from two perspectives at once, namely an academic perspective and a religious perspective. He explained that after attending lectures on religious moderation and civic education, the students often continued informal discussions in the room or after evening recitations. In the discussion, various issues such as tolerance between religious communities, social media ethics, and women's participation in public life were not discussed normatively, but were associated with daily life experiences and values learned in the study of the Qur'an, hadith, and moral books. According PMR6:

"What I feel is not that I am confused about choosing between what is taught on campus or in Islamic boarding schools. What happened was that we learned to connect the two."

Informant PMR7 added this information:

"For example, when discussing tolerance or freedom of opinion on campus, at the pesantren we were invited to understand how the Prophet appreciated differences of opinion and how Islam teaches manners when delivering criticism. So we learned that being a democratic citizen must also maintain morals."

These experiences show that the flow of student transfers between campuses and pesantren is not an identity conflict, but a continuous reflective process expressed in public dialogue to deepen academic knowledge in the light of the discourse of Islamic values. Meanwhile, education obtained from higher education institutions provides a model of democracy, the constitution, the rights of citizens, and pluralistic life, while life in pesantren provides space for these types of interpretations to be studied through Islamic ethics (Chaves & Wals, 2018). Within this framework, negotiation is not a process of conflicting value systems that must be taken at a compromise point in order to reach an agreement, but rather a pedagogical process that reconciles civic responsibility and commitment to religious beliefs among these students. Thus, the two educational ecologies play different but complementary roles. The students broaden their thinking about national issues at the academic level, and the religious space leads them morally to actualize and apply that knowledge in the real world. This process allows citizenship education at the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School not to stop solely at mastering democratic concepts, but to become a learning effort that shapes the way they should think, behave, and behave as citizens who adhere to Islamic values.

Transforming Religious Democratic Citizenship into Muslimah Civic Agency

The results of the study show that the renewal of civic education at the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School is not only related to the formation of an understanding between Islam and democracy, but develops to the point where these students have the ability to realize it into their form of leadership, devotion, and communal participation. The implication of this finding is that the results of citizenship education in Islamic boarding schools do not only produce the orientation of Religious Democratic Citizenship values, but also transform into Muslimah Civic Agency—that is, the capacity of female students to actively participate as citizens-Muslimah-intellectuals and citizen actors who are responsive to social problems. This change is realized through the combination of academic experience methods at UIN Walisongo, as well as living in the pesantren room, by combining student leadership, communication skills, literacy, and social sensitivity.

Various activities in Islamic boarding school organizations, public speaking training, literacy studies, involvement in religious event committee segments, or community service programs are not treated as additional activities, but are included as part of civic learning to realize democratic values based on principles that they can apply in real life among female students. Thus, being a good citizen at the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School is not only interpreted as

knowing the constitution or obeying the laws of the country; It is also seen as inseparable from the integration of knowledge, piety, leadership, and community service into one civic practice.

The findings of the observation show that the Muslimah Civic Agency was formed through various daily activities that provide opportunities for female students to be directly involved. In this sense, here the students behave in a way that is in harmony with the core aspects of what they have learned both formally on campus and informally in the pesantren. All students have experience as organizational officers in Islamic boarding schools, coordinators of religious activities, moderators during discussions, emcees at events, and committee members who carry out social program activities in the community around them. On certain nights, researchers found someone who gave public speaking training and the person came to pray in turn with the students as a way to increase confidence in speaking in general as well as learn how to convey his ideas in a polite way.

Literacy activities that include book discussions, tracing national themes, and literature on women's leadership in Islam are also part of pesantren activities. The researcher further found that when pesantren organized social service activities, community assistance programs, and religious education programs, the students not only played the role of participants, but were involved in designing activities, coordinating with related parties, and evaluating their implementation. This shows a diverse experience, where life in pesantren can be seen as a social laboratory that allows students to develop leadership competencies and service to the community, which is also part of the character of citizenship. PMR1 informant said,

"We always remind that the knowledge gained on campus and in Islamic boarding schools should not stop at oneself. Students must dare to appear, dare to speak, be able to lead activities, and be ready to serve the community. Because later when they return to their respective environments, the community not only needs people who are good at explaining religion, but also needs Muslim women who are able to be role models, solve problems together, and provide benefits to others. That is what we continue to train through various activities at the Islamic boarding school."

The statement shows that caregivers view civic education as an *empowerment* process that connects intellectual capacity with social responsibility. In this perspective, the success of education is not measured solely by academic achievement or the depth of mastery of religious knowledge, but by the extent to which female students are able to translate Islamic values and civic values into concrete actions that benefit society. Therefore, various organizational activities, leadership, communication training, and social service in Islamic boarding schools are an inseparable part of the transformation process of Religious Democratic Citizenship into Muslimah Civic Agency, namely the ability to present civic values in daily life practices through leadership, service, and community service.

The experience conveyed by the caregiver is in line with the narrative of the students who interpret life at the Rahmaniyyah Islamic Boarding School as a

learning space that forms the courage to take a role in the community. One of the students of the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Study Program explained that before living in the Islamic boarding school, she tended to avoid activities that required the ability to speak in public. However, various activities of the Islamic boarding school, such as hosting recitations, leading book discussions, delivering cults, and participating in *public speaking* training, gradually built their confidence. According to her, the experience not only improves communication skills, but also fosters awareness that a Muslim woman has a responsibility to convey ideas and provide benefits to society. PMR4 says:

"In the past, I never dared to speak in front of many people. Even when presenting in class I was always nervous. After living in Rahmadiyah, we were often given the opportunity to be MCs, moderators, deliver cults, and even lead discussions. At first I was scared, but over time I got used to it. I feel that pesantren teaches that women must also be ready to speak up to convey kindness and benefit the community, not just learn for themselves."

A similar experience was conveyed by a student of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program who is active in pesantren organizations and community service activities. He explained that his involvement as an administrator of the pesantren provides experience in managing work programs, building communication with various parties, resolving differences of opinion through deliberation, and leading social activities involving the surrounding community. According to him, the experience provided lessons that were not always obtained through lectures on campus because he learned to face real problems that require the ability to make decisions while maintaining relationships with others. PMR2 says:

"When we become administrators, we have to learn to listen to the opinions of our friends, find solutions if there is a problem, divide tasks fairly, and be responsible until the activity is completed."

Informant PMR8 added this information:

"When holding social services or Ramadan activities, we also interact directly with the community. From there, I understood that being a citizen is not only knowing your rights and obligations, but also being willing to be present to help the community when they are in need."

Both experiences show that the formation of civic character in the Islamic Islamic Boarding School of Rahmadiyah Students does not just stop when democratic values and/or some Islamic teachings become internalized normative knowledge, but undergoes a transformation into a potential capacity for public action. Various organizational activities, leadership and communication training, and literacy in the community become a learning space for female students where they practice as well as apply the attitudes learned from the two educational ecologies examined in Subtheme 3. Thus, through these experiences, it appears that the courage to speak up, the ability to lead, the skills to collaborate and cooperate with others, sensitivity to social issues, and the commitment to serve the community are not developed ad-hoc, but are conditioned during the process of continuous habituation in the span of education in this Islamic boarding school.

Discussion

The central finding of this study demonstrates that civic education in the Rahmaniya Student Islamic Boarding School is reconstructed not as a process of transferring civic knowledge, but as a transformative formation process in which citizenship values are continuously produced through habituation, reflection, dialogue, and exemplary practices within the pesantren community. This finding challenges the dominant assumption that civic education primarily operates through formal curricular transmission aimed at developing civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Instead, the Rahmaniya experience illustrates that citizenship is formed as a lived experience, where democratic values become meaningful through daily practices of deliberation, shared responsibility, solidarity across differences, and engagement in social services (Kallio, Wood, & Häkli, 2020). Therefore, the distinctive feature of pesantren-based civic education lies in its ability to transform abstract civic concepts into moral practices embedded within religious and communal life. In this regard, the flexibility of civic education at the Rahmaniya Student Islamic Boarding School represents a different orientation from conventional civic education models that emphasize constitutional understanding and political literacy, because it places lived experience as the primary medium for shaping civic character.

This finding contributes to expanding the conceptual understanding of citizenship formation, which has traditionally been associated with formal educational institutions such as schools and universities. Previous studies on civic education have largely emphasized the acquisition of civic knowledge, understanding of public issues, participatory skills, and democratic dispositions through structured curricular content (Oboler, 2006). Although this perspective provides significant insight into the cognitive and participatory dimensions of citizenship education, it provides limited explanation regarding how civic identity is constructed through religious experience and everyday social interactions. The Rahmaniya case demonstrates that citizenship identity is not merely acquired through intellectual engagement with democratic principles but is also cultivated through continuous encounters between knowledge, moral reflection, and communal practices.

The findings further reveal that the civic learning experienced by female students through the Pancasila Education course does not remain confined to classroom-based understanding but undergoes a process of reinterpretation when integrated into the religious and social environment of the pesantren. This process occurs through three interconnected mechanisms: first, the integration of civic values into the tradition of religious learning and moral cultivation; second, the internalization of values through the exemplary practices of pesantren caregivers; and third, the embodiment of civic principles through communal living arrangements. Consequently, citizenship formation emerges as a translation process from knowledge into values and ultimately into lived experience,

producing a form of citizenship that is not solely oriented toward compliance with constitutional norms but is rooted in moral and spiritual consciousness (Patrick, 2017). This finding extends previous scholarship on lived citizenship by demonstrating that civic practices can emerge within religious educational spaces where intellectual reflection, social habituation, and Islamic value internalization operate simultaneously.

Based on these findings, this study introduces the concept of Integrated Civic Learning Ecology as an analytical framework for understanding citizenship formation among university students in pesantren settings. This framework suggests that civic education does not develop within a single educational environment but emerges through dynamic interaction among academic, religious, and socio-communal spaces (Mohamed & Anisa, 2012). The academic space provides students with conceptual foundations regarding democracy, constitutional principles, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and public participation through university learning experiences. Meanwhile, the religious space facilitates the moral interpretation of these concepts through religious study circles, character development programs, caregiver exemplification, and the internalization of organizational values such as amanah, 'adl, musāwah, and shūrā (Rozaq & Zain, 2024). Furthermore, the socio-communal space becomes the arena where these values are practiced, negotiated, and transformed into everyday actions through deliberation, leadership experiences, mutual responsibility, division of communal duties, and social service activities.

The interaction among these three spaces produces a complex learning ecology that gradually shapes civic identity as an inseparable combination of religious identity, academic identity, and social responsibility. Therefore, the reconstruction of civic education in Islamic boarding schools should not be understood merely as the integration between university curriculum and Islamic education, but rather as the formation of a civic ecology that transforms citizenship knowledge into character, social practice, and moral responsibility (Krasny & Tidball, 2010). This perspective provides a new understanding of pesantren-based civic education, where students are not only prepared to understand their rights and obligations as citizens but are also developed as Muslim women who integrate religious commitment, national identity, and social responsibility within their everyday interactions.

The findings also indicate that the re-imagination of civic education at the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School does not involve the addition of new curricular components, but rather represents an integrated process between academic experiences acquired at higher education institutions and character formation developed through pesantren life. Living within the pesantren environment enables students to continuously reflect upon civic values learned on campus and reinterpret them through religious practices, communal relationships, and daily social experiences (Tidball, & Krasny, 2007). Through this process, citizenship is transformed from a normative understanding of state structures and constitutional principles into a moral identity constructed through integrated educational experiences.

The findings of this study further extend existing civic education literature, which has predominantly examined citizenship formation within formal educational settings such as schools and universities. Previous studies have generally conceptualized civic education as the development of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions through classroom instruction, curricular resources, and participation in student organizations (Jordan et al., 2019). While this perspective provides an important foundation for understanding the academic dimension of civic education, it does not fully explain how civic meanings become morally embedded when learners engage with religious educational traditions. The Rahmaniya experience demonstrates that understandings of democracy, tolerance, citizens' rights, and political participation are not produced exclusively within academic spaces or religious spaces separately. Rather, these understandings emerge through the interaction and negotiation between both educational environments within a specific socio-religious context. This finding highlights that citizenship formation is a relational process in which knowledge from higher education is continuously interpreted through religious values and communal experiences.

This study therefore develops the concept of the Two Educational Ecologies Framework to explain how citizenship among female students in university-based Islamic boarding schools is continuously negotiated through two interconnected yet distinctive learning environments. The first ecology is the academic ecology developed through university education at UIN Walisongo Semarang, which provides intellectual resources related to constitutional democracy, human rights, diversity, citizenship participation, and critical thinking (Ardoin, Bowers, & Gaillard, 2023). Through this academic environment, students acquire conceptual frameworks that enable them to critically understand their position as citizens within a democratic society. However, these concepts do not automatically become civic dispositions without interaction with another educational ecology that provides moral meaning and practical orientation.

The second ecology is the religious ecology developed through everyday life in the Rahmaniya Islamic Boarding School. Unlike the academic ecology that primarily emphasizes conceptual understanding, the religious ecology constructs ethical orientations through the tradition of study circles, character formation, caregiver exemplification, communal commitments, Qur'anic and hadith studies, and engagement with *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. These religious practices provide interpretive frameworks through which students understand civic values as part of their moral and spiritual responsibilities. Thus, religious ecology does not function as an alternative to democratic citizenship but rather provides an ethical foundation through which democratic principles are contextualized within Islamic moral reasoning.

Importantly, the relationship between these two educational ecologies is not characterized by competition, hierarchy, or domination. Instead, they operate dialogically and mutually influence how students interpret and internalize civic life. This interaction enables democratic values to be accepted not merely as external concepts associated with modern political systems but as principles that

can be understood through their compatibility with Islamic ethical traditions (Gallay et al., 2022). Consequently, the Two Educational Ecologies Framework positions civic education in Islamic boarding schools as an outcome of continuous interaction among educational environments that collectively shape students' intellectual orientations, moral commitments, and social practices.

At a higher conceptual level, the interaction between these two educational ecologies produces what this study identifies as Religious Democratic Citizenship. This concept represents a form of citizenship in which religious commitment and constitutional democratic values are not perceived as contradictory but are integrated into a coherent civic identity. Within the Rahmadiyah context, citizenship is not separated from religious life; rather, it is expressed through social engagement, respect for diversity, deliberative decision-making, concern for collective welfare, and participation in community-oriented activities (Johnson & Thomas, 2024). Therefore, the identities of Muslim women, santri, university students, and citizens do not develop as competing categories but as interconnected dimensions of identity shaped through integrated educational experiences.

The emergence of Religious Democratic Citizenship indicates a significant transformation in understanding citizenship education within Islamic educational institutions. Rather than producing citizens who merely possess democratic literacy or religious commitment independently, pesantren-based civic education enables students to transform these values into social practices. In this stage, democratic citizenship becomes embodied through leadership activities, collaboration, community service, and social interventions that combine Islamic ethical principles with academic competencies and civic responsibility (Tsabatiyya, Muthohar & Sanie, 2025). This process leads to the formation of Muslim Civic Agency, referring to the capacity of Muslim women to act intelligently, responsibly, and participatively in pursuing public goals while maintaining their religious commitments.

The concept of Muslim Civic Agency developed in this study contributes to the broader discussion of citizenship education by emphasizing that agency is not only produced through political awareness or institutional participation but also through the ability to translate religious values, intellectual resources, and civic obligations into meaningful social actions. Within the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School, students demonstrate this agency through leadership practices, community engagement, social dialogue, and collective problem-solving. Therefore, civic identity in this context should not be understood as a fixed status but as a dynamic process that moves from knowledge acquisition, value negotiation, and finally toward social action.

When examined holistically, the reconstruction of civic education at the Rahmadiyah Student Islamic Boarding School represents an integrated transformation process rather than an isolated educational intervention. The process begins with Integrated Civic Education, which creates a meeting point between academic learning at UIN Walisongo Semarang and religious guidance embedded in pesantren life (Warren, 1992). This integration generates interaction

between two educational ecologies: academic education that develops understanding of democracy, constitutional principles, and civic life, and religious ecology that develops ethical orientation through religious study traditions, moral formation, caregiver exemplification, and pesantren cultural practices.

The interaction between these ecologies enables female students to continuously reflect upon and reinterpret citizenship concepts, ultimately producing Religious Democratic Citizenship—a civic orientation that demonstrates loyalty to Islamic principles while simultaneously embracing Indonesian constitutional democracy (Coleman, 2001). This orientation does not remain limited to normative awareness but develops into Muslimah Civic Agency, namely the capacity to transform religious values, academic knowledge, and civic obligations into leadership practices, community service, social dialogue, and participation for collective welfare. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that citizenship formation within student pesantren operates as a dynamic continuum that moves from knowledge formation, through value negotiation, toward the actualization of civic action.

Building upon these relationships, this study proposes the Transformative Citizenship Formation Model as a theoretical contribution to explaining citizenship formation mechanisms within higher education institutions, particularly university-based pesantren in Indonesia (Sibbett, 2016). This model argues that citizenship development cannot be understood solely as the outcome of classroom-based civic learning or as a product of religious socialization within pesantren. Instead, it emerges from the interaction between higher education, Islamic intellectual traditions, and lived experiences of social participation.

The Transformative Citizenship Formation Model differs from previous civic education models that primarily emphasize civic competence acquisition or democratic character formation. This model conceptualizes civic transformation as occurring through four interconnected stages: (1) Integrated Civic Education, (2) Two Educational Ecologies, (3) Religious Democratic Citizenship, and (4) Muslim Civic Agency. These stages represent a continuous transformation process through which Muslim women develop not only democratic literacy and religious commitment but also intellectual capacity, social leadership abilities, and dialogical competence in engaging with diversity while integrating Islamic knowledge and values for national development.

Therefore, the Transformative Citizenship Formation Model expands contemporary civic education scholarship by introducing university-based pesantren as a distinctive educational context for cultivating active, inclusive, and contextual citizenship in pluralistic societies. The model demonstrates that citizenship formation can emerge through the integration of faith, knowledge, and social responsibility, offering an alternative framework for understanding how religious educational institutions contribute to democratic citizenship formation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that citizenship education in the Rahmaniyyah Student Islamic Boarding School should not be understood merely as a process of

transmitting democratic knowledge or national values, but as a transformative formation process through which Muslim female students reconstruct their citizenship identities within an integrated educational ecosystem. The most significant and unexpected finding challenges the dominant public perception that Islamic boarding schools represent spaces detached from, or even incompatible with, democratic education. Instead, this study demonstrates that pesantren can function as generative citizenship environments where Islamic ethical values, academic knowledge, and democratic principles interact to produce meaningful civic practices. Theoretically, this finding contributes to civic education scholarship by introducing the Transformative Citizenship Formation Model, which explains how citizenship develops through the interaction between academic ecology, religious ecology, and social experience, ultimately forming religious democratic citizenship and Muslim civic agency.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations that provide directions for further research. First, the research was conducted within a single university-based Islamic boarding school context, meaning that the findings primarily reflect the experiences of female university students within a specific socio-religious environment and may not fully represent other pesantren models, geographical contexts, or student populations. Second, the qualitative design provides an in-depth understanding of meaning-making processes but does not examine the long-term development of civic identity or measure variations across different demographic groups. Future research should therefore expand investigations across diverse types of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and other Muslim-majority contexts, include broader samples involving students of different genders and educational backgrounds, and employ comparative or longitudinal approaches to further examine how religious, academic, and social environments collectively shape transformative citizenship formation.

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