Empowering Gender Equality Education Through Local Wisdom: A Study on Civic Education

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Abstract: The recognition of Bissu in Bugis society reflects the long-standing existence of gender diversity within Nusantara's cultural landscape. Bissu is not only a cultural and spiritual identity but also plays a central role in Bugis social structures, serving as ritual leaders, healers, and guardians of the Lontara script. However, the marginalization of Bissu and other gender-diverse groups remains an issue in contemporary society. Civic education, as an instrument of democratic learning, has the potential to foster inclusive awareness and promote justice by integrating discussions on gender diversity. This study highlights the importance of incorporating knowledge about Bissu into the civic education curriculum to enhance students' understanding of social justice, human rights, and pluralism. Through a critical pedagogical approach, civic education can equip students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to engage in a more inclusive and democratic society. By integrating Bissu into formal education, this study argues that educational institutions can play a crucial role in reducing prejudice, fostering empathy, and promoting a culture of respect for gender minorities. This approach not only enriches civic education but also strengthens the foundation for a more just and diverse society.

Keywords: Gender diversity, Civic education, Human rights, Inclusivity

Introduction

Bissu is a social group that has been an integral part of the history and culture of the Bugis people since the era of the Bugis Kingdoms. They have played a central role as ritual leaders, royal advisors, healers, and teachers of the Lontara script (Lathief, 2004). In the La Galigo epic, Bissu are even described as the first group to descend to earth, assisted by two special figures, one of whom was named Anurungeng Telinoe (Davies, 2018). Thus, the existence of Bissu represents not only cultural and social aspects but also reflects deep-rooted beliefs within Bugis traditions (Azizah, 2022; Ismoyo, 2020a; Syahrir et al., 2020).

Beyond being part of Bugis culture and history, Bissu also plays a crucial role in the social construction of gender in Bugis society. The Bugis recognize five gender categories that complement each other: oroané (men), makkunrai (women), calalai (women who express masculine traits), calabai (men who express feminine traits), and Bissu, which does not fall into the binary gender category Davies, 2007). Bissu is considered a manifestation of social and spiritual balance in Bugis society, representing a combination of gender roles in a harmonious manner (Suliyati, 2018; Syamsurijal et al., 2023a).

However, throughout history, Bissu has faced various forms of violence and discrimination, both from society and the government. One of the most tragic events they endured was the "Toba" operation, which occurred in the 1950s to 1960s, alongside the Islamization movement led by DI/TII under Kahar Muzakkar (Lathief, 2004; Suheri et al., 2021). The religious rituals performed by Bissu were deemed acts of heresy and were considered incompatible with Islamic teachings (Koentjaraningrat, 2004). They were forced to choose between abandoning

their identity and following Islamic teachings or facing execution. Hundreds of their ritual artifacts were also destroyed or submerged (Lathief, 2004). Discrimination against Bissu continues to this day, including the cancellation of the "Arajang cleansing" ritual in 2023-2024 by the government due to differences in beliefs and gender orientation. Tensions between Bissu and conservative Islamic groups in Bugis persist, described as a "ticking time bomb ready to explode" (Triadi, 2019). The situation has forced some Bissu to "hide" under the guise of the Hajj title among Muslim communities (Syamsurijal et al., 2023b).

In the context of citizenship, Bissu is often positioned as part of local belief groups. The gender construction of Bissu is not only related to social identity but also an integral part of the Attoriolong belief system, the indigenous faith of the Bugis people (Lathief, 2004). Therefore, Bissu's rights are not limited to civil and political rights in the public sphere, as is common in gender struggles, but also encompass the right to spiritual and cultural expression. This right is part of human rights guaranteed in democratic systems and the rule of law. The Indonesian Constitution recognizes the right to freedom of religion and belief as stated in Article 28E paragraph (2) and Article 29 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution. Thus, the rights of Bissu as a local belief group should be equally protected as those of other religious groups in Indonesia.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with the literature review method. A qualitative approach is chosen because this research focuses on analyzing concepts and interpreting meanings in the context of the relationship between Bissu gender, local beliefs, and citizenship rights. According to Creswell (2017), qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena in-depth by exploring non-numerical data sourced from various documents, texts, and perspectives of informants. The literature review method is selected as it allows researchers to examine various academic literature, including books, scientific journals, articles, and legal regulations relevant to the research topic. Hart (2018) states that literature reviews serve to identify, analyze, and synthesize existing knowledge to build a solid theoretical foundation for research. In this study, this method helps review the development of the Bissu gender concept, their citizenship status, and the protection of local belief rights within Indonesia's legal system.

The data in this research are sourced from various academic documents related to theoretical studies, previous research, and official documents. Theoretical studies include books and academic journals discussing gender concepts in Bugis society, the role of Bissu in history and culture, as well as citizenship perspectives and local belief rights. Previous research comprises scientific articles examining discrimination against the Bissu group, their historical marginalization, and government policies regarding belief groups. Official documents include legal regulations such as the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the Human Rights Law, and regional regulations related to the protection of belief groups.

Data analysis in this study is conducted using content analysis techniques developed by Krippendorff (2019). This analysis aims to identify patterns, concepts, and meanings embedded in the literature reviewed. The analysis process follows several stages:

1. Data Reduction: Selecting and filtering relevant information related to the research focus, namely Bissu gender, local beliefs, and citizenship.
2. Data Presentation: Organizing information systematically so that it can be conceptually and analytically interpreted.
3. Drawing Conclusions: Interpreting findings in relation to the theories used and formulating implications from the research results.

Using this method, this research is expected to provide a deeper and more critical perspective on the role of Bissu gender in Bugis society and the challenges they face within Indonesia's citizenship system.

Results and Discussion

Gender

This study employs two theoretical perspectives to understand the phenomenon of gender: gender performativity theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. These two theories are highly relevant in understanding Bissu as a unique expression of traditional gender identity. In Bugis tradition, Bissu is regarded

as a gender identity that exists beyond the binary categories of men and women, shaped through specific social and cultural practices. Butler's perspective helps explain how Bissu utilizes performative acts to transcend dominant gender norms. Meanwhile, Bronfenbrenner's framework highlights how broader social systems, including traditions and rituals, create space for diverse gender constructions, such as Bissu, to persist within the dynamics of social change. The integration of these two theories allows for an in-depth analysis of how local traditions influence gender formation and how these traditions adapt to broader social contexts.

Gender Performativity Theory

Gender performativity theory, introduced by Butler (1990), emphasizes gender as a social performance shaped through repeated actions and behaviors rather than a fixed biological attribute. Butler asserts that gender identity is not something innate but rather something constructed and created within daily social interactions. Butler distinguishes between "performance," which presumes the existence of a pre-existing subject, and "performativity," which challenges the notion of a stable subject itself. According to Butler, gender is a "role" played based on social norms prevailing in society. In other words, gender is formed through repeated and meaningful social practices.

This concept challenges traditional views that consider gender as an inherent and natural trait, leading to the understanding that gender identity can be fluid, changeable, and shaped according to specific social and cultural contexts (Butler, 2005). Butler critiques essentialist perspectives that regard gender differences as natural and fixed. She also challenges naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality, which assume that women's social existence is determined by their physiological traits (Butler, 2020). In her view, the categories of men and women result from social performance carried out within broader social structures, including institutions, language, and culture (Butler, 2005). This concept of performativity opens opportunities for various gender identities to emerge, acknowledging that there is no singular way to identify as a man or a woman (Connell, 2009). Thus, gender performativity theory offers space for freedom in gender expression, although tensions with dominant societal norms often arise (Butler, 2005; Skelton et al., 2009).

According to this theory, an individual's gender behavior is influenced by existing social norms, which are then reproduced and reinforced through daily actions. This notion highlights that gender is not merely the result of social roles passively accepted but is actively constructed by individuals engaged in social interactions. As a result, gender performativity is an ongoing process that remains open to change and transformation (Rokhmansyah, 2016). This understanding underscores the importance of feminist perspectives in deconstructing patriarchal systems that often regulate gender norms while also providing space for the liberation of more inclusive and fluid gender identities (Butler, 2005). Therefore, this theory presents a view on the flexibility of gender identity, allowing each individual to negotiate their roles and expressions within various social contexts (Morris, 1995).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human ecological development highlights the importance of the chronosystem, which refers to the dimension of time encompassing individual and societal changes throughout their lives. In the context of gender, the chronosystem explains how perspectives on gender can shift over time due to broader social, political, and technological dynamics (Blumberg, 2008). These changes are evident in how societies respond to feminist movements and LGBTQ+ rights, which have significantly transformed societal perceptions of gender (Joksimovic, 2023). This phenomenon demonstrates that gender identity is not solely influenced by biological factors but is also shaped by evolving social factors in response to political and cultural changes (Edelman, 2001).

Meanwhile, Butler's gender performativity theory (1990) offers a more micro-level understanding of how gender identity is constructed through repeated individual actions, emphasizing that gender is not fixed or essential but rather the result of a series of roles performed by individuals within specific social contexts. Butler asserts that gender is a repetitive social performance rather than an inherent biological attribute. In relation to Bronfenbrenner, gender performativity theory provides an explanation of how individual social practices, influenced by prevailing social norms, can lead to changes in gender construction over time. In this view, gender is the result of dynamic interactions between individuals and the surrounding social structures, highly dependent on broader social contexts (Stromquist, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner (1981) provides a macro framework for understanding how various layers of social environments, from families to national political policies, influence individual development, including gender identity. In this regard, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory supports gender performativity theory by demonstrating that influences from broader social systems, such as societal gender norms, significantly impact the construction and transformation of individual gender identities (Perron, 2017). Both theories emphasize that gender cannot be understood in isolation but is always connected to broader social, cultural, and historical contexts. This perspective allows us to see gender as something flexible and open to change, unbound by fixed social structures or predefined roles (Connell, 2009).

These two theories are relevant in explaining the tension between restrictive social structures and individual agency that seeks to transcend those norms. Butler, through gender performativity theory, illustrates that performative actions serve as tools for individuals to challenge and resist dominant societal norms. Meanwhile, Bronfenbrenner's theory shows that changes in broader social systems—such as more inclusive policies or increased social awareness—can create opportunities for more flexible and inclusive gender transformations.

Bissu as a Gender Identity

In Bugis society, Bissu holds a central role in both its belief system and social structure (Lathief, 2004). Their role extends beyond being a social group; they serve as ritual leaders, royal advisors during the Bugis Kingdom era, healers, and teachers of the Lontara script (Lathief, 2004). Furthermore, the role of Bissu is deeply embedded in the mythology of ancient Bugis deities, as narrated in the La Galigo epic (Pancana, 2017). According to La Galigo, Batara Guru, regarded in ancient Bugis belief as the first being to descend to Earth, was accompanied by two special figures—two Bissu, one of whom was named Anurungeng Telinoe (Graham, 2018). These two Bissu stood beside Batara Guru upon his descent, tasked with structuring and developing the world, including creating language, medicine, culture, customs, and everything necessary for civilization (S. G. Davies, 2018). Therefore, for the Bugis people, Bissu is not merely an element of culture, social structure, power, and history, but also a component of spiritual belief (Azizah, 2022; Ismoyo, 2020b; Syahrir et al., 2020).

These various aspects shape the Bugis perspective on gender. Gender identity is influenced by the interaction between individuals and their ecological environment, including social systems, culture, and historical context (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Perron, 2017). Consequently, gender is understood as a process or an action performed through the repetition of social norms rather than an innate, fixed identity (Butler, 2020). The integral position of Bissu in Bugis history has shaped societal perceptions regarding the classification of individuals based on gender.

Bugis society offers a profound understanding of gender diversity that transcends the traditional binary division of men and women. The Bugis recognize five overlapping and complementary gender categories: oroané (men), makkunrai (women), calalai (biologically female but expressing masculinity), calabai (biologically male but expressing femininity), and Bissu, which exists outside of the binary gender classification (Davies, 2007). Bissu is a unique category, as they do not conform to the conventional expressions of men or women but rather embody a combination of various gender roles within Bugis society (Davies, 2007; Syamsurijal et al., 2023b). As individuals perceived to possess qualities from all gender categories, Bissu are regarded as the epitome of social and spiritual balance within Bugis society (Suliyati, 2018).

Education as an Institution Shaping Social Orientation

Human awareness, including understanding of gender, is not naturally formed but is shaped through the internalization of external factors that occur within social interactions. Locke (1690) argued that no idea is innate; all knowledge is acquired through sensory experiences of the external world and reflections on self-awareness. Locke stated, "there is nothing in the mind except what was first in the senses" (Rakhman, 2018). George Berkeley reinforced this idea by asserting that "if we had no senses, the world would not exist" (Rakhman, 2018). Thus, all constructions of reality, including the concept of gender, result from socially internalized experiences through interaction with the environment.

In this context, educational institutions play a fundamental role as the primary agents in shaping an individual's social orientation. Education is not merely a means to transfer knowledge but also functions as a social mechanism that reproduces the values recognized within a society. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) argued that

education is designed with two primary missions: moral and political. Education not only shapes individual character but also conditions them to align with the social and political order desired by the state.

Tilaar (2009) emphasized that education is never neutral; it is always embedded in the dynamics of power. Educational institutions emerge and operate through public policy, making them an integral part of political processes. Freire (1985) further critiqued that education often becomes an instrument of hegemony, used by dominant groups to instill ideology without providing learners with the space to think critically. Freire's critique of the "banking system" model highlights how education can function as a mechanism for reproducing power, where learners merely become passive recipients of dominant ideas without being empowered to comprehend and challenge social injustices (Freire, 2008).

Thus, educational institutions serve as arenas where social constructions of gender are reproduced and transmitted. Schools not only teach academic knowledge but also reinforce gender norms institutionalized within the social structure. In other words, education plays a role in shaping, reinforcing, or even challenging gender constructions within society.

Civic Education

The term civic education has been used under various names in Indonesia's national curriculum. Beginning in 1957, it was referred to as "Kewarganegaraan," in 1959 as "Civics," in 1962 as "Kewargaan Negara," in 1968 as "Pendidikan Kewargaan Negara," in 1975 as "Pendidikan Moral Pancasila," in 1994 as "Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan," in 1999 as "Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan," and in 2013 again as "Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan" (Rahardjo, 2020). Finally, in 2021, with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, this subject was renamed "Pendidikan Pancasila." However, conceptually, all these name changes refer to the idea of "Civic Education."

In discussions on citizenship, civic education is distinguished from citizenship education. These terms are often used interchangeably in practice. However, their scope differs, with civic education referring to a subject designed within the formal education curriculum, whereas citizenship education extends beyond formal education to include informal and non-formal education's impact on shaping citizenship (Somantri, 1972; Sundawa, 2022; Wahab & Sapriya, 2024). Citizenship education, therefore, is more broadly used to highlight the instructional and nurturant effects of education in shaping an individual's character as a citizen (Sundawa, 2022). Civic education implemented in schools is fundamentally aimed at shaping an ideal citizen who can act as a rational and intelligent decision-maker (Sundawa, 2022). This concept of the ideal citizen is universally acknowledged among citizenship scholars as "good and smart citizenship" (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024).

Political Indoctrination Through Civic Education

Civic education emphasizes the theoretical aspects of the citizen-government relationship, interactions between citizens, and the roles of citizens within a political system. These relationships have given rise to various schools of thought and branches in citizenship studies (Isin & Turner, 2002). The inculcation of these relationships defines what constitutes a "good citizen," understood as someone who knows their rights and responsibilities (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024). Aristotle (384-322 BCE), in his work "Politics," associated the concept of "good citizenship" with the constitutional character of a state and the types of relationships outlined in its constitution. At this point, civic education embodies both political and moral visions.

Civic education cannot be separated from the internalization of constitutional values in formal educational institutions. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) argued that "legalization is necessary to regulate education, whether for political or moral reasons." From a political science perspective, legalizing education serves as a political socialization process where fundamental political values are instilled in citizens (Massialas, 1969). These fundamental orientations can be cognitive, affective, or evaluative (Sirozi, 2007). David Easton (1957) identified three elements of basic political orientation: (1) political objects or perceived images—people or groups do not act in a vacuum but form distinct perceptions of political life; (2) values or desired images—instilling values shapes an individual's worldview, including political ethics; and (3) political attitudes—values influence the conditioning of political attitudes (Easton, 1957).

Civic education is a clear example of direct political socialization (Pratiwi & Wiwik, 2015). It plays a significant role in shaping political awareness and understanding through school education (Sasana Tunggal, 2023). The

primary goal of civic education is to produce good and intelligent citizens—those who obey and uphold the law and regulations with a sense of responsibility (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024). Due to its close ties to law and political values, the definition of a good citizen is deeply connected to the output of political systems. As a result, political education and socialization are integrated into civic education curricula.

In many totalitarian and developing countries, political leaders utilize education to achieve political objectives. They exert control over the education system and embed political messages through curricula and instructional materials (Sirozi, 2007). Political socialization is also indirectly formed through interactions within structured environments. Schools—through curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, intra-school organizations, teachers, administrative staff, and other elements—may explicitly or implicitly influence basic political orientations (Sirozi, 2007). The transformation of political symbols in schools occurs because educators themselves receive political education (Anggara, 2013).

Democratization Through Civic Education

As previously discussed, civic education was initially associated with state-driven political indoctrination. Civics was first introduced as a subject in the United States in 1870 (Cox et al., 2005). It was initially taught within the American Legion Veterans framework, based on the psychological theory of "faculty psychology" or "field psychology" (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024), which emphasized the primacy of the "mind and body" in education. If there was a failure in learning, it was attributed to the "mind," not the "body."

In practice, civics became an indoctrination tool. Teaching principles were based on "what to think" and "how to think" (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024). The curriculum was structured to include only what the government deemed appropriate for students to learn. Paulo Freire (2008) criticized this approach as "banking education," which merely encouraged rote learning and ideological compliance, making students passive recipients of government ideology without critical engagement (Freire, 2008). At the time, civics education emphasized rote memorization (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024).

A similar situation occurred in Indonesia, where teachers functioned as government mouthpieces to indoctrinate citizens (Nasution, 2016). The development of civics and civic education in Indonesia was heavily influenced by global trends, both in teaching methods and content (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024). Instead of being curriculum developers, teachers were merely "spokespersons" or "conduits" of government messaging (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024).

Over time, civic education became closely linked to the democratization of society, particularly among youth. In the United States, one of the pioneers of this movement was Howard Wilson (Wilson, 1938). These ideas were later incorporated into laws and political science as the concept of political democracy (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024). John Searles described civics as "concerned with governing democracy in theory and practice," with a broader focus often tied to citizenship education (Gross & Zeleny, 1958). To develop a democratic society, civic education must incorporate knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as outlined by the Center for Civic Education (1994):

1. **Knowledge**: The Content of Civic Education
- The necessity of government
- The purpose of government
- Constitutional principles
- Government structure
- Concepts and values underpinning the political system
- Individual rights and responsibilities
- Citizen roles in democracy
- Community participation in decision-making

2. **Skills**: Effective Participation in Democracy
- Critical thinking and evaluation
- Communication and negotiation
- Conflict resolution and consensus-building

3. **Attitudes**: Democratic Citizenship Character

- Personal morality and social responsibility
- Public duty and respect for law
- Commitment to balance between individual and collective welfare

Civic education plays a crucial role in democratization by fostering civic intelligence, responsibility, and participation (Sundawa, 2022). Democracy is not inherited but must be cultivated through structured education (Wahab & Sapriya, 2024). Thus, civic education serves as both an academic subject and an instrument for shaping citizens who contribute to a more mature and sustainable democratic society.

Building Gender Awareness Through Civic Education

Bissu gender identity is part of the local belief system that has long existed in Bugis tradition. The gender identity of Bissu is not merely related to social and sexual orientation but also has a spiritual dimension closely tied to the Attoriolong belief system. In Bugis society, five gender categories are recognized: oroané (men), makkunrai (women), calalai (biologically female but expressing masculinity), calabai (biologically male but expressing femininity), and bissu, which exists beyond the binary gender framework (S. Davies, 2007). The role of Bissu in Bugis history is immortalized in the La Galigo epic as part of the social and religious structure that connects human existence with the spiritual realm (Pancana, 2017). Their existence reflects a more complex understanding of gender than the dualistic male and female concepts found in modern societies.

From the perspective of Judith Butler's gender performativity theory (2005), gender is not a fixed identity but rather a social construction formed through repeated cultural practices. Butler (2005) asserts that "Gender is not something that one is, it is something one does, an act… a doing rather than a being." In the Bugis context, Bissu is not only a gender identity but also a representation of culture and spirituality with significant social roles, such as ritual leaders, healers, and guardians of the Lontara script (Lathief, 2004). Thus, recognition of Bissu in the social and legal system is not only a matter of individual rights but also part of the effort to preserve cultural and spiritual diversity, which has long been a fundamental part of Nusantara's history.

In the context of citizenship, recognizing Bissu gender identity is not only related to civil and political rights in the public sphere but also to the right to spiritual and cultural expression. Civic education, as an instrument of democratic education, plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive gender awareness. Civic education does not merely teach citizens' rights and responsibilities within a legal framework but also cultivates an understanding of diverse identities and inclusive values in society. Sundawa (2022) emphasizes that "Democratic civic education must be based on the principles of justice and non-discrimination so that it can instill awareness of diversity and human rights." Citizenship education that does not solely focus on positive law but also accommodates local and customary values can serve to eliminate discrimination against minority groups such as Bissu.

The Indonesian Constitution provides a clear legal foundation regarding freedom of religion and belief, as stipulated in Article 28E paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that "Every person has the right to the freedom to believe in their faith, to express their thoughts and attitudes, in accordance with their conscience." Additionally, Article 29 paragraph (2) affirms that "The state guarantees the freedom of each citizen to adhere to their respective religions and to worship according to their religions and beliefs." In this context, civic education plays a role in ensuring that educational policies in schools and academic institutions can accommodate the rights of local belief groups such as Bissu and prevent marginalization based on gender identity and belief systems.

The importance of education in fostering gender awareness can also be analyzed through Bronfenbrenner's ecological development theory (1981), which highlights how social, cultural, and historical environments influence individual development. Bronfenbrenner (1981) states that "The environment in which human beings grow is not a passive context but an active force in shaping individual development." Gender awareness is not passive but is influenced by social, cultural, political, and technological changes (Edelman, 2001; Joksimovic, 2023). In this context, education functions as a socialization tool that not only transfers knowledge but also reproduces the values embraced by society. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) stated that "The aim of education is to create citizens who are virtuous and capable of contributing to the well-being of the state." This idea is reinforced by Tilaar (2009), who asserts that "Education is never neutral; it is always linked to ideology and power structures in society."

Therefore, civic education must serve as a means to deconstruct biased understandings of gender and local beliefs while fostering awareness of the importance of equal rights for all citizens. Democratic education does not merely produce law-abiding individuals but also cultivates citizens who are critical and reflective of the values upheld in society. By integrating gender diversity into the civic education curriculum, the state can ensure that education does not become a tool for discrimination but rather an instrument that strengthens inclusivity and social justice for all groups in society.

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills of Gender-Diverse Communities Through the Integration of Bissu in Civic Education

Civic education plays a strategic role in shaping knowledgeable citizens with participatory skills and inclusive civic values. Integrating discussions about Bissu, as a representation of gender diversity in Bugis culture, into the civic education curriculum can enrich students' understanding of justice, diversity, the rule of law, and individual rights, including the right to cultural and religious expression.

Knowledge Aspect

In terms of knowledge, the introduction of Bissu can be linked to principles of justice and diversity. According to multicultural education theory, a deep understanding of various cultural and gender identities can reduce prejudice and stereotypes among students (Umam, 2018). This concept aligns with the ideas of James A. Banks (2015), who emphasizes that a curriculum reflecting cultural diversity can help students understand the complexity of social identities and encourage respect for differences. Banks outlines five key dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction processes, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and school culture empowerment. In this context, introducing Bissu into the civic education curriculum can be categorized as part of prejudice reduction and a more inclusive knowledge construction process.

A deeper understanding of specific social groups can help reduce prejudice through cognitive mechanisms. According to Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis, meaningful interaction with different social groups can reduce stereotypes and negative biases, particularly when such interactions occur in supportive environments, such as educational settings that encourage discussions and mutual understanding. Additionally, cognitive schema theory in social psychology explains that individuals construct mental representations of their social world based on their experiences and the information they receive (Fiske & Taylor, 2020).

In this context, learning about Bissu can create a form of "symbolic contact," where students gain direct information about the history, roles, and social significance of Bissu, thereby reducing cognitive biases they may have previously held. Limited or stereotypical knowledge about a social group can lead to misconceptions; however, providing accurate and diverse information, such as through formal education that introduces the role and cultural value of Bissu in Bugis society, can update cognitive schemas, reduce prejudice, and broaden students' perspectives on gender diversity.

From the perspective of critical education developed by Paulo Freire (1984), education should liberate individuals from ignorance and oppressive social structures. In this context, integrating an understanding of Bissu into civic education means creating space for students to question dominant narratives that restrict their understanding of gender and social justice. Through reflective dialogue and discussions based on social realities, students can recognize that gender and cultural identity are not rigid binaries but rather a rich spectrum of histories and social values.

Thus, education that accommodates gender diversity through the introduction of Bissu not only broadens students' knowledge but also contributes to the formation of a more tolerant society that values human rights. Theories discussed indicate that knowledge plays a fundamental role in reducing prejudice and stereotypes through symbolic contact, cognitive schema reconstruction, changes in social attribution, and moral reflection. Therefore, integrating Bissu into civic education is not only part of multicultural education but also an effective pedagogical strategy to foster more inclusive and democratic citizens.

Skills Aspect

In terms of skills, integrating Bissu-related content into civic education can be an essential instrument in developing critical thinking, analytical skills, communication, and conflict resolution. Education based on critical thinking not only serves as a medium for information transfer but also shapes reflective and solution-oriented thinking in addressing social issues. In this context, constructivist theory pioneered by Piaget (2005) emphasizes that effective learning occurs when students actively engage in discovering and understanding concepts. Vygotsky (1978), in his sociocultural learning theory, asserts that learning processes cannot be separated from social interaction. Students can better understand complex concepts if they are encouraged to participate in discussions, debates, and collective reflections with peers and facilitators. By exploring the social construction of gender and the social role of Bissu in Bugis society, students can be encouraged to question and analyze traditional gender assumptions embedded in social structures.

In the context of multicultural education, Banks (2015) asserts that one of the indicators of effective education is its ability to teach social skills and conflict resolution in intercultural interactions. By discussing Bissu, a group outside the conventional binary gender framework, in civic education, students can develop better communication skills in dealing with differences. Moreover, conflict resolution skills can be developed through a peace education approach (Galtung, 1996). Education that emphasizes conflict resolution and social reconciliation is crucial in shaping citizens capable of addressing differences without violence. Understanding the history and role of Bissu in Bugis communities enables students to learn how minority groups navigate marginalization and how cultural negotiation strategies are employed to maintain their existence in society. Presenting material on Bissu can foster students' awareness of the lived experiences of minority groups and cultivate social empathy.

Thus, the skills aspect of civic education that integrates Bissu-related content is not merely academic enrichment but also part of a more democratic and inclusive citizenship education strategy. Students are not only trained to understand citizenship concepts normatively but also to apply them in daily life with improved critical thinking, communication, and conflict resolution skills.

Attitudes and Beliefs Aspect

Civic education plays a strategic role in shaping students' inclusive, tolerant attitudes and their appreciation for diversity. One approach that can be used is Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals develop attitudes and behaviors through observation and social interaction. Modeling, or social imitation, is a key element in attitude formation (Bandura, 1977). In the context of learning about Bissu, this theory is relevant because students do not merely acquire cognitive information about the existence and role of Bissu in society but also learn to internalize values of respect for diverse identities through social experiences in the classroom.

If civic education introduces students to narratives of Bissu life, including their social and religious roles in Bugis society, they will have the opportunity to observe social interaction patterns different from traditional gender constructions they previously understood. Thus, they can learn that gender identity is not absolute and rigid but rather part of social diversity that deserves respect. Furthermore, reinforcement in learning is a key factor. If educational institutions and educators actively encourage discussions about diversity and inclusivity with a positive attitude, students will more easily develop empathy and acceptance of gender minority groups such as Bissu. Bandura (1986) also highlights that positive reinforcement, in the form of appreciation for tolerant attitudes, can increase students' tendency to adopt these values in daily life. Furthermore, culturally responsive education, as proposed by Gay (2010), emphasizes that learning environments that respect cultural diversity can enhance students' social awareness of minority groups. This approach incorporates students' diverse life experiences into the curriculum, making learning more contextual and relevant to social realities.

In a broader context, civic education does not merely aim to produce academically intelligent individuals but also citizens with civic virtue. Mutual respect and appreciation for differences are not just moral aspects but also fundamental elements for a healthy democratic society. Culturally responsive education enables students to understand that collective well-being is achievable when every individual, regardless of gender or cultural background, has an equal place in society. Thus, integrating Bissu into civic education is not only relevant in fostering inclusive attitudes but also aligns with the primary goals of civic education: instilling democratic values, social justice, and human rights.

Conclusion

The recognition of Bissu in Bugis society reflects the long-standing existence of gender diversity in Nusantara's culture. From the perspective of civic education, an understanding of inclusive gender identities should be an integral part of citizenship education to instill values of justice and non-discrimination. Civic education that accommodates gender diversity not only strengthens understanding of human rights but also plays a role in reducing bias and social marginalization against gender minority groups such as Bissu. Therefore, an inclusive education approach based on local values can serve as a solution to fostering a more democratic and equitable sense of citizenship.

Integrating knowledge about Bissu into civic education can enhance students' understanding of diversity and inclusivity. From the **knowledge** aspect, understanding the social and cultural roles of Bissu can help reduce prejudice and broaden students' perspectives on non-binary gender identities. From the **attitude** aspect, education based on multiculturalism and critical theory enables students to appreciate differences and build empathy toward minority groups. Meanwhile, from the **skills** aspect, inclusive civic education provides students with the ability to think critically and actively participate in building a more tolerant society. Thus, citizenship education that incorporates gender diversity values can contribute to shaping citizens who are more aware of their rights and responsibilities in a pluralistic society.

Recommendations

1. The government and education policymakers need to strengthen inclusive policies in the civic education curriculum by incorporating materials on gender diversity, including Bissu, as part of local history and culture.
2. Educators should adopt a critical pedagogy approach in teaching gender diversity so that students can understand social realities more objectively and avoid discriminatory stereotypes.
3. Training for civic education teachers is necessary to ensure that gender diversity materials are delivered objectively and based on human rights principles.
4. Communities and educational institutions are encouraged to create a conducive environment for dialogue and understanding of gender diversity, fostering a more inclusive society that respects differences.
5. Further research is needed to evaluate the impact of integrating gender diversity into civic education on students' perceptions and attitudes toward gender minority groups in Indonesia.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

* The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

Conflict of Interest

* The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest

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