

Citizenship Status as A Form of Unity

Ernita Sihombing^{1*}, Yuwen Siahaan², Annalia Hutapea³, Sahata Manalu⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas

ernitashbg03@gmail.com

Abstract

Citizenship status serves as a fundamental pillar in shaping national identity and fostering unity among diverse communities within a state. This paper explores how citizenship, as both a legal status and a social construct, contributes to the integration of individuals into the national framework by ensuring equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. It highlights the role of civic education, political participation, legal frameworks, and institutional support in strengthening citizens' awareness and commitment to national solidarity. Furthermore, this study examines challenges such as ethnic discrimination, social inequality, and weak law enforcement that may hinder unity, emphasizing the importance of inclusive policies and justice-based governance. Ultimately, citizenship is presented not merely as an administrative identity, but as a dynamic force for cultivating shared values, mutual respect, and cohesive nationhood.

Keywords

Citizenship; National Unity; Civic Education; Political Participation

Introduction

Indonesia is a country that consists of many diversities from many aspects such as culture, customs, religion, ethnicity, and language. Therefore, maintaining unity and integrity is the first task of Indonesia as a country filled with differences. Citizenship status is a legal bond attached to a person that shows their relationship with a country. Citizenship is a form of identity that allows individuals to feel the meaning of ownership, rights and social obligations in the country.

Having citizenship means that a person has an identity or status in the national scope (WAHYUNI, 2016). Citizenship makes a person involved and participate in national life. Citizenship also creates interaction between one person and another as citizens so that acceptance grows of shared social values that exist in a country. In Indonesia, for example, the value of mutual cooperation, religious values, or the values contained in Pancasila are shared values.

Article 27 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes that "all citizens have equal standing before the law and government and are required to uphold the law and government without exception." This shows that citizenship status is the basis for every individual to enjoy the rights and obligations as a citizen. In addition, Law Number 12 of 2006 concerning Citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia also regulates citizenship in more detail.

Although the law has regulated citizenship, in practice, citizenship status as a form of unity still faces many challenges and problems (Yustiana, 2019). This arises from many factors, for example, injustice in the application of laws and policies related to citizenship, for example policies that discriminate against minority groups, gaps in implementation and law enforcement, intolerance, lack of unity, to lack of awareness and participation of the community. This research was conducted so that the concept of one citizenship, namely Indonesian citizens, can increase public and government awareness that citizenship is not only an identity but also a symbol of national unity.

Based on this, the formulation of the problem in this study is how citizenship status can be applied as a form of unity of the Indonesian nation. (Angrayni, 2015).

Methodology

The research method used in this study is the library research method, which is part of the qualitative research approach. In this method, data is collected and analyzed based on written sources that are relevant to the topic of study. These data sources can be academic books, articles in scientific journals, research reports, and various scientific publications and other official documents. In addition, credible digital or online sources such as publications from research institutions, academic portals, and government sites are also used as supporting references. The main purpose of this library method is to explore theories, concepts, and previous findings that have been documented, so that they can form a strong framework for thinking in answering research problems (Prayuda, Purba, et al., 2024). Researchers carry out the process of identifying, classifying, and analyzing information obtained from various literatures in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues being studied. Thus, this approach not only describes existing knowledge, but is also used to examine gaps, build syntheses, and find conceptual solutions to the problems raised.

The steps in implementing this method begin with determining a specific research topic, followed by searching for and collecting relevant literature. After that, a critical review of the contents of each source found is conducted, in order to evaluate the extent to which the data can support the research analysis. This analysis process is carried out systematically and in-depth, so that a complete and logical scientific narrative can be compiled. By utilizing this library method, researchers are expected to be able to produce scientific works that are based on a strong theoretical foundation and can be academically accounted for. This method also provides space for researchers to critically reflect on various views or theories that are developing, while developing arguments that are relevant to the context of the problem being studied. (Prayuda, Gultom, et al., 2024).

Discussion

Fostering a sense of belonging and national awareness is a fundamental benefit of citizenship. By holding Indonesian citizenship, each individual acquires equal rights and responsibilities to contribute to the nation's progress. This sense of belonging instills a commitment to participate actively in the country's development across various sectors. Moreover, it obligates citizens to obey the law, respect the rights of others, and engage in activities that benefit the nation collectively. The rights enjoyed by citizens—such as the right to vote and be elected, the right to education, and the right to legal protection—are tangible

evidence of the state's recognition and respect for every citizen's existence. These rights affirm that the nation values equality and is committed to ensuring that every individual feel included and empowered. Through this framework, national identity is cultivated and strengthened. Citizenship, therefore, serves as both a legal and emotional bond between the individual and the nation.

Citizenship also functions as a legal and moral foundation for unity. The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945) clearly outlines the legal parameters of citizenship in Article 26, defining who is considered an Indonesian citizen. Furthermore, Article 28 emphasizes equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens, thereby eliminating discrimination and fostering social harmony. This legal equality forms the basis for moral unity by assuring that all individuals are treated fairly under the law and that their fundamental rights are safeguarded. Political participation is a direct manifestation of citizenship and a crucial element in maintaining national unity. In a democratic society, every citizen has the freedom to exercise their political rights, including voting and running for office. The opportunity to influence governmental policies by contributing to the decision-making process reduces tensions and prevents conflicts. Active and inclusive political participation not only reflects democratic values but also strengthens the bonds of national cohesion by ensuring that all voices are heard and respected.

Civic education acts as a powerful instrument for uniting the nation. As a moral compass, it aims to create intelligent, democratic, and virtuous citizens who uphold the ideals of democracy and contribute to the nation's development. By nurturing a collective identity and promoting shared national goals, civic education becomes a unifying force. It enhances tolerance, mutual respect, and harmony among citizens, and deepens their understanding of rights and responsibilities, ensuring that these are fulfilled with a strong sense of accountability. National institutions play a crucial role in realizing unity and cohesion. Government bodies, parliaments, and judicial institutions must uphold the law fairly and consistently to eliminate discrimination and promote justice. These institutions are responsible for ensuring that citizens have access to education, healthcare, and decent employment, which fosters a sense of security and well-being. Furthermore, by facilitating political participation, state institutions guarantee that every citizen's voice is considered in policymaking, thus reinforcing the democratic process and national solidarity.

However, several challenges still hinder the achievement of national unity. One of the most pressing issues is racial and ethnic discrimination. Indonesia's rich diversity in culture, religion, race, and ethnicity, while a source of strength, also holds the potential for conflict. Despite the long-standing tradition of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), incidents of racial and ethnic violence continue to occur, highlighting a lack of unity awareness among some citizens. Discriminatory acts such as harassment, destruction, and violence reflect the urgent need to reinforce national identity and cohesion. Social inequality is another significant barrier to national unity. Often, wealthy citizens are perceived as having superior status compared to those from poorer backgrounds, which results in unequal access to social resources and opportunities. This disparity fosters social jealousy and dissatisfaction among lower-income groups, who may feel marginalized or inferior within the social structure. The resulting tensions can lead to conflict and undermine efforts to build a unified and just society.

Lastly, weak law enforcement presents a major challenge to fostering unity. When the legal system is perceived as unfair or lacking transparency, citizens may lose trust in the government and legal institutions. Such distrust can lead to social fragmentation and conflict. Additionally, lax law enforcement can facilitate abuses such as dual citizenship exploitation for personal gain, which undermines national integrity and harms society. Addressing these challenges requires a firm commitment from all sectors to uphold justice, equality, and the spirit of unity. (Sibuea, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept and practice of citizenship serve as a cornerstone in the construction of a united and harmonious nation. Through citizenship, individuals develop a sense of belonging and national awareness that transcends regional, ethnic, or religious differences. This identity fosters a shared responsibility to contribute to the nation's development in various sectors, from education and economy to politics and social welfare. Citizenship also guarantees equal rights and responsibilities for all, thus promoting inclusivity and participation across the diverse fabric of Indonesian society. Civic education becomes an essential medium in instilling democratic values, moral awareness, and national character. It nurtures responsible, critical, and ethical citizens who are aware of their roles within the country. The educational process encourages the development of tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation—values that are indispensable in preserving national unity. Furthermore, by increasing knowledge of one's rights and obligations, civic education contributes to the creation of a society that functions in harmony, order, and justice. Civic engagement and education work hand in hand to ensure that unity is built not only from top-down state mechanisms but also from the awareness and will of the people.

The legal foundation of citizenship as outlined in the 1945 Constitution reinforces this unity by offering a framework for equality before the law. Legal recognition of citizenship ensures that every person has access to justice, protection, and opportunity without discrimination. It also forms the moral compass for national unity by emphasizing equal treatment, human dignity, and non-discriminatory governance. Moreover, political participation as a right and responsibility of citizens acts as a mechanism to bridge different social groups and regions in the democratic process. When citizens engage in political life—whether by voting, being elected, or expressing opinions—they contribute to collective decision-making and national stability. The role of state institutions is equally crucial in safeguarding national unity. Fair law enforcement, equitable distribution of resources, and inclusive policy-making are essential to creating a sense of justice and security. When institutions operate transparently and serve the public interest, they gain the trust of citizens, which in turn reinforces a sense of national solidarity. These institutions must also facilitate inclusive political and social participation to ensure that every citizen feels represented and respected in the decision-making process. Effective governance and the rule of law are the backbones of social cohesion and national integrity.

Nonetheless, significant obstacles remain in achieving these ideals. Racial and ethnic discrimination continues to threaten the unity of the Indonesian nation. While Indonesia's pluralism is a strength, it can also lead to division if not managed with sensitivity and justice. Acts of intolerance, exclusion, and violence highlight the need for stronger policies and education that promote intercultural understanding and respect for diversity. Likewise, social inequality creates gaps in access to resources, opportunities, and recognition, often leading to resentment and social unrest. These disparities must be addressed to prevent the marginalization of certain groups and to ensure that every citizen enjoys a dignified and equal place in society.

References

- Angrayni, L. (2015). Hukum Pidana Dalam Perspektif Islam Dan Perbandingannya Dengan Hukum Pidana Di Indonesia. *Hukum Islam*. <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/hukumislam/article/view/1154>
- Iqbal, F. M. (2021). Kudeta Militer Myanmar Dalam Perspektif Hukum Internasional. *Jurnal Dialektika Hukum: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*. <http://ejournal.fisip.unjani.ac.id/index.php/jurnal-dialektika-hukum/article/view/541>
- Prayuda, M. S., Gultom, C. R., Purba, N., & ... (2024). FROM AVERSION TO ENGAGEMENT: TRANSFORMING EFL HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' APPROACH TO ENGLISH IDIOMS THROUGH ROLE-PLAYING. ... *Review: Journal of ...* <http://journal.uniku.ac.id/index.php/ERJEE/article/view/8869>
- Prayuda, M. S., Purba, N., & Gultom, C. R. (2024). The Effectiveness of English as a Science Medium Instruction in Higher Education. ... *Penelitian Pendidikan IPA*. <https://jppipa.unram.ac.id/index.php/jppipa/article/view/7986>
- Sibuea, D. T. (2018). Pemberantasan Perdagangan Orang Melalui Instrumen Hukum Nasional Dan Hukum Internasional Di Indonesia. *JCH (Jurnal Cendekia Hukum)*. <https://ejurnal.stih-pm.ac.id/index.php/cendekiahukum/article/view/35>
- Suhendar, S., & Kartono, K. (2020). Kerugian Keuangan Negara Telaah Dalam Perspektif Hukum Administrasi Negara Dan Hukum Pidana. In ... *Kencana Satu: Dinamika Masalah Hukum academia.edu*. <https://www.academia.edu/download/83678976/5151.pdf>
- WAHYUNI, F. F. (2016). Sanksi Pidana Pemerkosaan Terhadap Anak Menurut Hukum Pidana Positif dan Hukum Pidana Islam. *Jurnal Media Hukum*. <http://repository.unisi.ac.id/id/eprint/230>
- Yustiana, D. (2019). Hukum Administrasi Negara. *Penerbit CV. Mitra Sumber Rejeki*. <https://www.terbitan.sasanti.or.id/index.php/pm/article/view/59>