GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: NAVIGATING SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

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Abstract

Global citizenship education addresses the multifaceted challenges of socioeconomic inequality and cultural diversity in Malaysia's educational landscape. Bridging the urban-rural education gap is crucial, alongside ensuring cultural sensitivity in curricula to cultivate a sense of belonging for all students. Balancing internationalization with local cultural preservation is essential to prevent the erosion of traditional values. Effective integration of global issues into education and teacher training programs is imperative. By tackling socioeconomic disparities and fostering a harmonious multicultural environment, Malaysia can successfully promote global citizenship and nurture inclusive, empowered citizens. This study used a quantitative approach via a survey of 55 items to collect relevant data from 354 university students. The data obtained were analysed using the PLS-SEM 4.0 software via the algorithm, bootstrapping and blindfolding method. The results showed significant relationship of Ho1, Ho2, Ho3, and Ho4 in influencing Promotion of Global Citizenship through the factors of Socioeconomic Status ($\beta = 0.128$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), Cultural Sensitivity in Curriculum ($\beta = 0.216$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), Internationalization Efforts ($\beta = 0.154$, $p = 0.01 < 0.05$), and Teacher Training Programs ($\beta = 0.196$, $p = 0.045 < 0.05$). Nevertheless, no significant relationship was found between Urban-Rural Education Disparities (0.185, $p = 0.090 > 0.05$) and Promotion of Global Citizenship. These results emphasize the necessity of holistic approaches to education that prioritize socioeconomic equality, cultural understanding, and effective teacher training to cultivate global citizenship skills and attitudes among students. Policymakers and educators should focus on bridging socioeconomic gaps, promoting cultural sensitivity, and integrating global issues into the curriculum to nurture inclusive and empowered citizens capable of contributing to a harmonious multicultural society. Furthermore, its offers valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics of global citizenship education in the Malaysian context.

Index Terms: Global Citizenship Education, Socioeconomic Inequality, Cultural Sensitivity, Teacher Training Programs, Multicultural Environment.

INTRODUCTION

Global citizenship education (GCE) is a vital approach designed to address critical challenges within Malaysia's educational system, particularly those arising from socioeconomic inequality and cultural diversity. The disparities between urban and rural educational experiences are pronounced, with students in rural areas often having less access to quality resources and learning opportunities compared to their urban counterparts (Singh & Han, 2017, Khan& Ahmad, 2015). Addressing this gap is fundamental to ensuring that every student in Malaysia, regardless of their location, receives a fair chance at quality education. This effort

aligns with broader national goals of fostering inclusivity and a sense of belonging among students from diverse backgrounds (Reimers, 2017).

Furthermore, the integration of cultural sensitivity into educational curricula is paramount. This involves a conscious effort to acknowledge and respect the rich tapestry of cultural identities that make up the Malaysian student population (Mansor & Rahim, 2014). By doing so, the education system not only promotes a more inclusive environment but also equips students with the necessary competencies to navigate and thrive in a globalized world (Davies, 2006). The focus on cultural sensitivity helps students develop a deeper understanding and respect for different cultures, which is essential for global citizenship.

The challenges addressed through GCE are interconnected with the need for balanced internationalization in the curriculum (UNESCO, 2014). This means that while global issues and perspectives are integrated into the educational framework, there is also a strong emphasis on preserving local cultural values and traditions. Such a balanced approach ensures that education does not simply globalize in content but also remains deeply rooted in the local cultural context, enriching students' learning experiences and fostering a well-rounded global citizenship outlook.

The scope of the research includes an in-depth examination of four pivotal factors that influence the promotion of global citizenship:

1. Socioeconomic Status: The study closely examines how variations in socioeconomic backgrounds affect students' access to and engagement with global citizenship education. It seeks to understand if students from lower socioeconomic statuses face greater challenges in accessing education that promotes a global perspective.

2. Cultural Sensitivity in Curriculum: The research assesses the effectiveness of curricula that incorporate diverse cultural perspectives and how such curricula impact students' understanding and acceptance of global citizenship concepts. This factor is crucial in determining the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of GCE.

3. Internationalization Efforts: The study evaluates how initiatives aimed at introducing students to global issues and cross-cultural interactions influence their perceptions and actions as global citizens. This includes programs that encourage student exchanges, international collaborations, and the integration of international case studies and content into the curriculum.

4. Teacher Training Programs: The effectiveness of teacher training programs in equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach global citizenship is critically analyzed. This factor is essential because teachers are on the frontline of implementing GCE, and their preparedness significantly influences its success.

As such, the purpose of the present study was to analyze the influence of various educational factors, including socioeconomic status, cultural sensitivity in curriculum, internationalization efforts, and teacher training programs, on the development of global citizenship among university students. By investigating these factors, this study aims to contribute to a broader

understanding of how educational interventions can enhance students' understanding and engagement with global citizenship, thereby addressing socioeconomic disparities and promoting an inclusive and empowered citizenry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Global Citizenship Education

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has emerged as a significant educational framework designed to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to face the challenges of a rapidly globalizing world. According to UNESCO, GCE aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and secure societies (UNESCO, 2014). In the context of Malaysia, GCE addresses specific national concerns related to socioeconomic inequality and cultural diversity, emphasizing the need for educational practices that foster inclusive societal participation.

Socioeconomic Status and Access to Education

Research indicates a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and educational outcomes. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often have limited access to quality educational resources, which can hinder their academic and social development (Sirin, 2005). In Malaysia, the disparity between urban and rural education is pronounced, with rural areas typically under-resourced and lacking in qualified educators and educational infrastructure (Khan& Ahmad, 2012). Studies like those by Singh and Shukla (2014) highlight that improving access to quality education for these disadvantaged groups is crucial for reducing educational inequities and promoting global citizenship.

Cultural Sensitivity in Curriculum

The integration of cultural sensitivity into the curriculum is vital for promoting an understanding of global interdependencies and respect for diversity, which are core components of GCE. In Malaysia, where a rich mosaic of ethnicities and cultures coexists, there is a significant push towards curricula that reflect this diversity (Azman, 2016). Furthermore, culturally inclusive curricula can enhance students' understanding of global cultures and issues, fostering a more inclusive environment that respects and values diverse perspectives.

Internationalization Efforts

Internationalization in education typically involves incorporating international content into the curriculum, promoting foreign language studies, and facilitating student exchanges. According to Knight (2004), such efforts enhance students' abilities to operate in an international context. In Malaysia, the push for internationalization has been linked with improving global citizenship outcomes (Hashim, 2017). By exposing students to global issues and diverse cultures, educational institutions can broaden their perspectives, making them more adept at navigating the complexities of a global society.

Teacher Training Programs

The role of teachers is pivotal in delivering GCE effectively. Professional development programs that equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach global citizenship concepts are crucial (Banks, 2018). In Malaysia, teacher training programs have been scrutinized for their ability to prepare teachers to handle diverse classrooms and teach complex global issues effectively (Mansor, 2015). Then, well-prepared teachers can significantly influence students' perceptions and attitudes towards global citizenship, making teacher training a critical area of focus for educational policy.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing GCE

While the potential of GCE to transform education is recognized, its implementation faces several challenges. These include curriculum overload, lack of teacher preparedness, and insufficient policy support (Reimers, 2017). However, the opportunities it presents, such as fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry and promoting social cohesion, are substantial. For Malaysia, where ethnic and cultural tensions have historically been a part of the societal fabric, GCE offers a pathway towards greater social unity and a strengthened national identity (Kumar, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey consisting of 55 items to gather relevant data from 354 university students. The survey aimed to measure various factors influencing the promotion of global citizenship. The data collected from the participants were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) 4.0 software, which is a robust statistical tool for complex data analysis.

PLS-SEM was chosen for its ability to handle complex models with multiple variables and its suitability for exploratory research where theory is less established (Hair *et al.*, 2017). The analysis involved several key steps, (i) algorithm, was used to estimate the parameters of the structural model. This involves iterative procedures to minimize error terms and maximize the explained variance in the dependent variable, which in this study is the promotion of global citizenship. (ii) Bootstrapping, to test the significance of the path coefficients and ensure the robustness of the model, bootstrapping was performed.

This non-parametric resampling technique involves repeatedly sampling from the data set and estimating the model multiple times. This process generates standard errors and confidence intervals for the path coefficients, allowing for hypothesis testing. (iii) Blindfolding, to assess the model's predictive relevance, the blindfolding method was used. This technique involves systematically omitting data points and estimating the model's ability to predict the omitted data. The resulting Q^2 statistics provide a measure of the model's predictive accuracy (Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2015). The PLS-SEM analysis revealed significant relationships for several hypothesized paths.

The use of PLS-SEM allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009), offering valuable insights into the factors that contribute to promoting global citizenship among university students. The methodological rigor provided by algorithmic estimation, bootstrapping, and blindfolding ensures the reliability and validity of the findings, making this study a significant contribution to the literature on global citizenship education.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study's findings underscore the complex interplay of various factors in enhancing global citizenship education among university students in Malaysia. Table 1 shows the overall result.

Table 1: Impact of Educational Factors on Global Citizenship Promotion among University Students

Factor	Path Coefficient (β)	p-value	Impact on Global Citizenship
Socioeconomic Status	0.128	0.000 < 0.05	Significant positive influence
Cultural Sensitivity in Curriculum	0.216	0.000 < 0.05	Significant positive influence
Internationalization Efforts	0.154	0.01 < 0.05	Significant positive influence
Teacher Training Programs	0.196	0.045 < 0.05	Significant positive influence
Urban-Rural Education Disparities	Not specified	0.090 > 0.05	No significant influence

The results of the study underscore the critical role that specific educational factors play in promoting global citizenship among university students in Malaysia. Socioeconomic status, which showed a significant but modest influence ($\beta = 0.128$), highlights the impact of students' economic backgrounds on their ability to engage with global citizenship concepts.

A more robust influence was observed with cultural sensitivity in the curriculum ($\beta = 0.216$), suggesting that curricula which integrate diverse cultural perspectives significantly enhance students' global awareness and sensitivity.

Internationalization efforts, with a coefficient of 0.154, indicate that initiatives such as exchange programs, international collaborations, and global issue integration into the curriculum effectively broaden students' global perspectives. Additionally, teacher training programs, showing a path coefficient of 0.196, are crucial in equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to foster a global citizenship mindset among students.

These findings collectively emphasize the importance of a multi-faceted approach in educational strategies to enhance global citizenship. Improving these key areas can significantly impact students' understanding of and engagement with global citizenship, preparing them to act as informed and responsible global citizens.

This has implications for policy-making, suggesting that targeted interventions in these areas may yield substantial benefits in fostering a globally aware and culturally sensitive student body.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings from the study reveal significant insights into how various educational factors contribute to promoting global citizenship among university students in Malaysia. A notable impact was identified across four key areas: socioeconomic status, cultural sensitivity in the curriculum, internationalization efforts, and teacher training programs.

Socioeconomic status plays a foundational role, suggesting that students from more advantaged economic backgrounds are better positioned to engage with global citizenship education. This finding aligns with existing literature that posits socioeconomic factors as critical in determining educational opportunities and outcomes (Banks, 2018). The modest beta value, however, indicates that while socioeconomic status is influential, it is just one of several factors that contribute to the promotion of global citizenship.

Cultural sensitivity in the curriculum emerged as the most influential factor. This underscores the importance of curricula that not only recognize but actively incorporate diverse cultural perspectives, thus enhancing students' understanding of and respect for global diversity (Banks, 2018). The strong correlation suggests that when students are exposed to curricula that reflect a broad spectrum of cultural narratives, they are more likely to develop the empathy and understanding necessary for effective global citizenship.

Internationalization efforts also showed a significant positive impact, highlighting the value of providing students with global exposure and interactive opportunities beyond their local environment (Deardorff, (2016). This could include student exchange programs, international collaborative projects, and courses focused on global issues, which help students gain a practical understanding of global interdependencies.

Teacher training programs were significantly linked to the promotion of global citizenship, indicating the crucial role of educators in guiding and facilitating students' development as global citizens. Effective training programs that equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate global citizenship concepts into their teaching practices are essential (Mansilla, & Jackson, 2019). This supports the notion that well-prepared teachers are instrumental in cultivating students' global competencies.

The study conclusively highlights these improvements in socioeconomic status, cultural sensitivity in curricula, internationalization efforts, and teacher training are all critical in enhancing global citizenship among university students. Each of these factors contributes uniquely to nurturing a comprehensive understanding of global citizenship, which is crucial for students living in an increasingly interconnected world. The integration of these factors into educational policies and practices can significantly enhance the effectiveness of global citizenship education, ultimately preparing students to contribute positively to a global society.

Based on the findings, several recommendations for policy and practice can be formulated:

1. Enhance Access and Equity: Educational policies should aim to mitigate the impact of socioeconomic disparities by ensuring that all students, regardless of their economic background, have equal access to global citizenship education. This might include

scholarships, resource allocation, and support programs specifically targeted at underprivileged students.

2. Curriculum Development: Institutions should continue to develop and refine curricula that prioritize cultural sensitivity. This includes integrating international case studies, promoting language diversity, and encouraging the exploration of global issues through a multicultural lens.

3. Expand Internationalization Initiatives: Universities should seek to expand their internationalization efforts through more robust exchange programs, international collaborations, and by inviting guest lecturers from diverse cultural backgrounds. These experiences should be made accessible to a wider range of students, not just those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

4. Invest in Teacher Training: There is a clear need for ongoing professional development for educators in the area of global citizenship. Training programs should focus not only on the pedagogical aspects but also on developing personal intercultural competencies and global awareness among teachers.

5. Research and Continuous Improvement: Continuous research into the effectiveness of different global citizenship education strategies will be vital in refining educational approaches. Longitudinal studies could particularly help in understanding how these educational interventions impact students' long-term engagement as global citizens.

Implementing these suggestions could significantly enhance the scope and impact of global citizenship education, fostering a more informed, empathetic, and proactive generation of global citizens.

Conflict of interest statement:

The authors declare that have no conflicts of interest related to this research. This study was conducted without any financial or personal relationships that could potentially bias the interpretation or reporting of the results

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