



Students' Perceptions of Fairness, Human Rights, and Conflict in Papua: A Civic Education Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how a contested national issue can be used as a civic education context for discussing fairness, human rights, and conflict. Using an exploratory qualitative descriptive design, the study combines purposive document analysis of public texts on Papua, justice, human rights, and peace with a school-based questionnaire administered to 18 respondents, most of whom were upper primary students. Four Likert-type items were used to capture perceptions of equal rights, mutual respect, fairness, and the relationship between injustice and conflict in Papua. The document data were analyzed through thematic grouping, while the questionnaire data were summarized using descriptive tabulation. The findings show that agreement and strong agreement dominated across all four items. Respondents strongly endorsed equal human rights, associated justice with fair treatment without discrimination, viewed mutual respect as relevant to conflict prevention, and tended to relate the Papua conflict to perceived injustice, although with greater neutrality on the Papua-specific item. The study contributes to civic education by showing that complex national issues can be translated into age-appropriate, dialogic, and evidence-informed learning about rights, dignity, recognition, and peaceful coexistence.



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INTRODUCTION

Civic education in plural societies is concerned not only with legal knowledge or formal citizenship status, but also with how learners understand justice, dignity, difference, conflict, and the moral obligations of living together in a diverse political community. In democratic settings, these questions are emerged when students encounter public controversies marked by inequality, distrust, and contested recognition. At that point, civic education extends beyond textbook constitutionalism into the domain of ethical judgment, empathy, and public reasoning. This wider orientation is consistent with the previous research that frames citizenship learning as a process through which learners make sense of rights, responsibilities, identity, and participation across local, national, and global contexts (Banks, 2008; Osler & Starkey, 2003, 2006, 2018).

The complexities of the Papua conflict remain among the most sensitive socio-political issues in Indonesia, yet they offer profound potential as a laboratory for civic learning by providing a critical entry point for students to examine the practical tensions between state sovereignty and universal civic principles. This approach allows for a substantive interrogation of systemic issues, such as unequal development, political mistrust, and racial discrimination, challenging learners to move beyond 'textbook constitutionalism' toward the development of ethical judgment and critical literacy regarding human rights, indigenous protections, and the structural roots of violence. By engaging with this concrete setting, abstract civic vocabulary, including terms like equality, respect, and participation, becomes more intelligible and evolves into a robust moral and political framework through which students can interpret the nation and their place within it. The Papua discourse functions as a deliberative space where learners negotiate the meanings of justice, dignity, and national belonging, emphasizing that democratic coexistence depends on more than legal formality, but on a shared recognition of why injustice matters and how exclusion erodes social trust (Zahidi, 2024; Brundige, 2004; Dickson, 2001).

Previous research has shown that the problems in Papua cannot be reduced to a single factor. Rather, it is shaped by overlapping histories of contested incorporation, marginalization, identity politics, security approaches, uneven access to resources, and competing claims about justice and authority (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Bertrand, 2014; Pamungkas, 2019; Wangge, 2023). More recent work also suggests that social and developmental inequalities continue to influence perceptions of exclusion and well-being in Papua, making the region an important site for understanding how justice and recognition are experienced in everyday life (Chasib, 2024; Sollis et al., 2023).

Against this background, this article is positioned not primarily as a political commentary on Papua, but as an exploratory inquiry in civic education. The central inquiry focuses on how controversial national issues can serve as tools for teaching learners about fairness and human rights. Here, injustice is viewed through a civic lens, treated as a crisis of education and citizenship that damages social cohesion and threatens the principle of equal status for all citizens within a shared society. Papua is therefore approached here as a substantive civic case through which learners may examine the relationship between dignity, discrimination, dialogue, and national unity (Banks, 2008; Osler & Starkey, 2003, 2006, 2018).

To examine that issue, this study uses Benny Wenda's public arguments as one interpretive lens rather than as a singular or definitive account of Papua. Wenda's public advocacy is analytically relevant because it foregrounds recurring themes of dignity, voice, fear, exclusion, and denied recognition. His language of rights and humanity is useful for civic analysis because it translates political grievance into moral claims that are legible within citizenship and human rights

education. On his official website, Wenda frames his mission in terms of enabling Papuans to determine their future through a free and fair process, while the broader public narrative around his advocacy repeatedly links political struggle with discrimination and dehumanization (Philpott, 2018; Wenda, 2016). In the present study, however, these arguments are not adopted uncritically; they are used to illuminate how injustice is narrated and morally framed in public discourse.

Using Wenda as an interpretive lens also requires placing his advocacy in dialogue with wider scholarship on Papua, justice, human rights, and peacebuilding. A stronger civic education approach does not ask students to accept a single political standpoint, but to read contested claims alongside broader work emphasizing dialogue, institutional reform, development, recognition, and conflict reduction. Existing scholarship has shown that durable peace in Papua cannot be understood through simplistic binaries, but depends on engagement with historical grievances, trust deficits, cultural recognition, and institutional arrangements capable of reducing violence and expanding justice (Bertrand, 2014; Chasib, 2024; Pamungkas, 2019).

Human rights education scholars argue that the language of rights becomes educationally meaningful when learners can connect formal principles to lived relations of respect, recognition, vulnerability, and institutional responsibility (Bajaj, 2011; Starkey, 2020). Similarly, civic education scholars have emphasized that citizenship learning in diverse societies must engage identity, inclusion, inequality, and participation rather than assuming a socially neutral public sphere (Banks, 2008; Osler & Starkey, 2003, 2018). Peace education research likewise highlights the importance of dialogue, empathy, non-violent conflict resolution, and inclusive school culture when learners are asked to interpret difficult social tensions (Lederach, 1997; Saleh et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, multicultural education research also underscores that mutual respect is not merely a symbolic value, but a practical competence for co-existence in diverse communities (Mardhiah et al., 2024).

Despite these relevant literatures, an important gap remains. Much of the scholarship on Papua operates at the macro level, focusing on history, security, development, and policy, while research on civic education and human rights often discusses justice, diversity, and peace in broad conceptual terms without examining how learners interpret a concrete and contentious national issue such as Papua. There is still limited work that brings these two fields together by asking how school-age respondents understand the relationship among human rights, fairness, mutual respect, and conflict in Papua, and how such perceptions may inform civic education practice. Accordingly, this study is framed as a small-scale empirical inquiry in civic education with three interconnected aims: *first*, to examine how social injustice in Papua is interpreted in selected public texts through the themes of dignity, rights, recognition, and conflict; *second*, to describe how a small group of school respondents perceive the relationship among human rights, mutual respect, fairness, and conflict in Papua; and *third*, to identify the pedagogical implications of these findings for civic education in a diverse nation. The study does not claim representativeness, nor does it treat school responses as evidence capable of resolving Papua's political complexity. Its contribution lies in showing how a concrete national issue can be used to support civic reasoning, value formation, and learning.

To maintain analytical clarity, the article is guided by the following research questions: (1) How is social injustice in Papua conceptualized through Benny Wenda's public arguments and related literature? (2) How do school respondents perceive the relationship among human rights, mutual respect, fairness, and conflict in Papua? and (3) What are the implications of these findings for civic education practice? By addressing these questions, the study contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it brings together justice theory, human rights education, and

conflict-sensitive civic learning. Practically, it offers a way for educators to transform a difficult national issue into an age-appropriate discussion of democratic values, recognition, and peaceful coexistence.

METHODS

This study employed an exploratory qualitative descriptive design supported by a small school-based descriptive survey. The design was selected because the study aimed to document and interpret perceptions rather than test causal relationships. In substantive terms, the study examined how selected public texts on Papua frame injustice, dignity, rights, and conflict, and how a small group of school respondents connected those themes to human rights, mutual respect, fairness, and social conflict.

The study was conducted at Cendekia Harapan School, Bali, between July and October 2025 in a supervised educational setting. Participants in the questionnaire strand were recruited through convenience sampling for exploratory educational purposes. The questionnaire produced 18 valid responses on the substantive items. However, the demographic item on respondent category was completed by 17 respondents, consisting of 15 Grade 6 students and 2 teachers. For transparency, substantive percentages are calculated from $n = 18$, while the respondent profile is reported from the 17 available demographic responses.

The document strand used purposive document analysis. Materials were selected because they explicitly addressed one or more of the following themes: Papua, injustice, human rights, dignity, recognition, conflict, dialogue, peace, or citizenship. The materials were grouped into three analytic clusters: (1) Benny Wenda's public advocacy and biographical materials, used to identify recurring claims related to injustice, dignity, discrimination, voice, fear, and self-determination; (2) scholarly works on justice, human rights education, multicultural citizenship, and peace education; and (3) academic and policy-oriented works on Papua dealing with conflict, exclusion, inequality, and peacebuilding. The aim of the document analysis was not to produce an exhaustive literature review, but to construct a focused interpretive corpus relevant to the study questions.

The questionnaire was intentionally brief and descriptive. It consisted of four close-ended Likert-type statements: (1) everyone deserves the same human rights, (2) mutual respect and appreciation of differences can help prevent conflict, (3) justice means that everyone is treated fairly and without discrimination, and (4) the conflict in Papua is related to a sense of injustice felt by Papuan people. Response options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Because the instrument was designed for exploratory civic inquiry, it was not intended to measure deep political knowledge or to generate psychometric scale scores. Its function was to capture broad response patterns concerning core civic values in relation to a concrete national issue.

Data analysis proceeded in two strands before being brought together through interpretive triangulation. *First*, the document data were analyzed through repeated reading, note-taking, coding, and thematic grouping. Recurring ideas were organized around categories such as rights, dignity, equality, voice, mutual respect, exclusion, dialogue, and structural injustice. These categories were then compared with the wider literature on justice, human rights education, and conflict-sensitive civic learning. *Second*, the questionnaire data were summarized using descriptive tabulation in the form of counts and percentages for each response category. Given the very small sample, no inferential statistical procedures were used. The two strands were then read together to examine areas of convergence between documentary themes and respondents' civic perceptions.

Several steps were taken to strengthen trustworthiness within the limits of a small exploratory study. The study reports item-level response distributions in order to maintain transparency, separates descriptive results from broader interpretation, and adopts a cautious stance toward political inference. Student agreement with statements about Papua is therefore not treated as evidence of expertise about the conflict, but as evidence of how respondents morally frame the issue in civic terms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented in two parts. The first reports the main themes identified through the documentary reading, and the second presents the respondent profile and questionnaire response distributions. Broader interpretation is developed in the discussion section.

The documentary reading identified four recurring themes. *First*, injustice was consistently framed as exclusion from fair treatment, public voice, and equal protection. *Second*, justice was presented as inseparable from dignity, suggesting that legal order alone is insufficient when people continue to feel unsafe, devalued, or unheard. *Third*, dialogue and institutional reform appeared as alternative or complementary pathways to conflict reduction, indicating that injustice in Papua is understood through more than one political vocabulary. *Fourth*, equality and mutual respect emerged as civic values linking the human rights dimension of the issue to broader concerns about social harmony and national unity. These themes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Analytical themes from the documentary reading

Theme	Core description	Representative emphasis in the texts	Relevance to civic education
Injustice as exclusion	Injustice was described as being denied fair treatment, public voice, and equal protection.	Marginalization, exclusion from decision-making, and unequal opportunity recur across the texts.	Helps students connect conflict with questions of membership and equal standing.
Justice as dignity	Justice was framed as more than law, requiring safety, respect, and recognition.	Dignity and lived experience were central to Benny Wenda's public arguments and to human rights scholarship.	Allows civic learning to move from legal rules to the human meaning of rights.
Dialogue and reform	Alternative perspectives emphasized dialogue, trust-building, and institutional reform.	Peace was linked to inclusive policymaking, reform, and credible public institutions.	Encourages balanced civic discussion rather than one-dimensional advocacy.
Equality and mutual respect	Respect for difference was repeatedly tied to	Cultural recognition and anti-discrimination themes linked civic	Supports classroom work on multicultural

	social harmony and unity.	values to peacebuilding.	citizenship and conflict prevention.
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The demographic profile drawn from the questionnaire shows that 15 respondents identified as Grade 6 students and two respondents were teachers. This item therefore contained 17 valid responses. Figure 1 presents the respondent distribution.

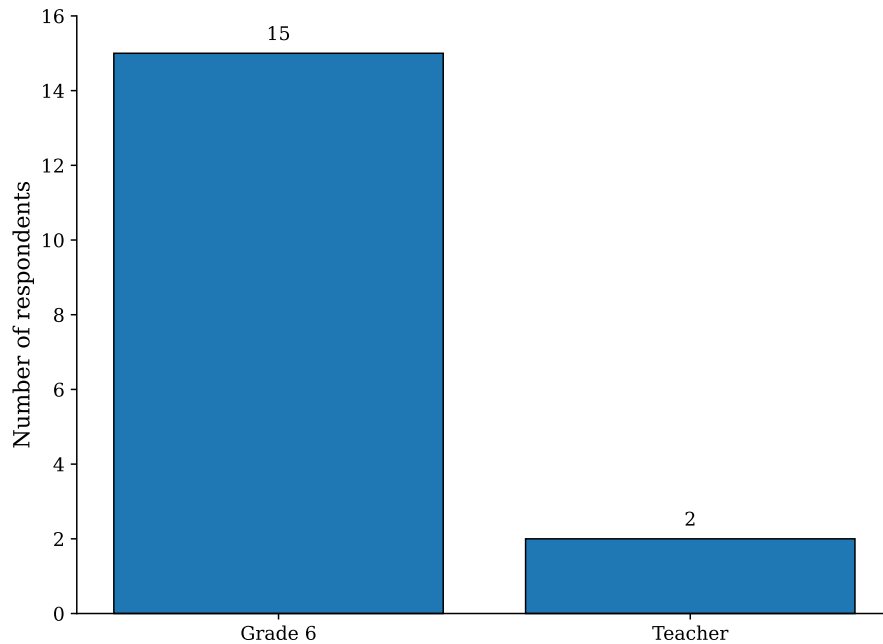


Figure 1. Respondent profile based on the available demographic item (n = 17)

For the first substantive item, 10 of the 18 respondents, or 55.6%, strongly agreed that everyone deserves the same human rights. Four respondents, or 22.2%, agreed, and another four respondents, or 22.2%, selected the neutral option. No respondent selected disagree or strongly disagree. Figure 2 presents this distribution.

Everyone deserves the same human rights

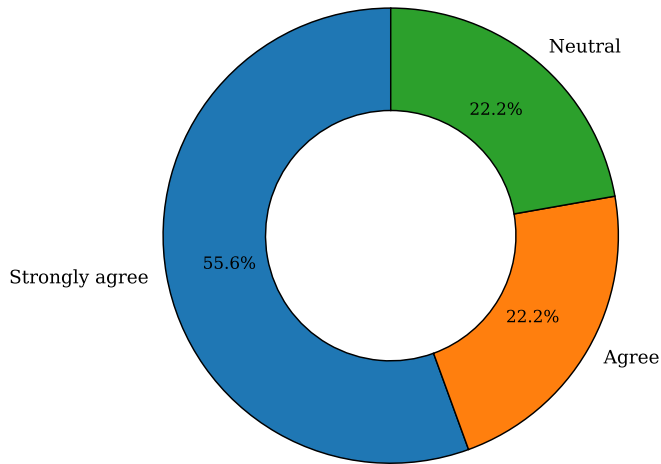


Figure 2. Response distribution for the item on equal human rights (n = 18)

For the second item, 6 respondents, or 33.3%, strongly agreed that mutual respect and appreciation of differences can help prevent conflict. Eight respondents, or 44.4%, agreed, while four respondents, or 22.2%, selected neutral. No respondent selected disagree or strongly disagree. Figure 3 presents the distribution for this item.

Mutual respect can help prevent conflict

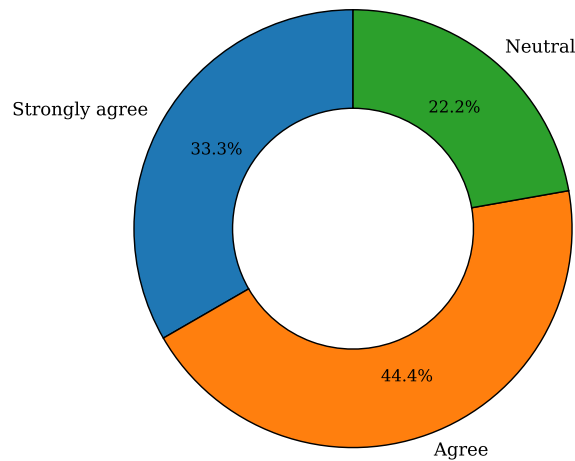


Figure 3. Response distribution for the item on mutual respect and conflict prevention (n = 18)

For the third item, 7 respondents, or 38.9%, strongly agreed that justice means fair treatment without discrimination, and another 7 respondents, or 38.9%, agreed. Three respondents, or 16.7%, selected neutral, and one respondent, or 5.6%, selected disagree. No respondent selected strongly disagree. Figure 4 presents these responses.

Justice means fair treatment without discrimination

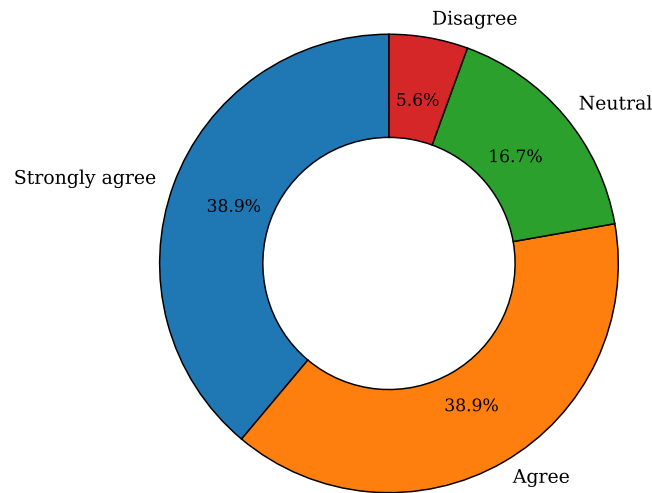


Figure 4. Response distribution for the item on justice as fair treatment without discrimination (n = 18)

For the fourth item, which most directly linked Papua to injustice, 2 respondents, or 11.1%, strongly agreed that the conflict in Papua is related to a sense of injustice felt by Papuan people. Ten respondents, or 55.6%, agreed, while six respondents, or 33.3%, selected neutral. No respondent selected disagree or strongly disagree. Figure 5 presents this response pattern.

The conflict in Papua is related to a sense of injustice

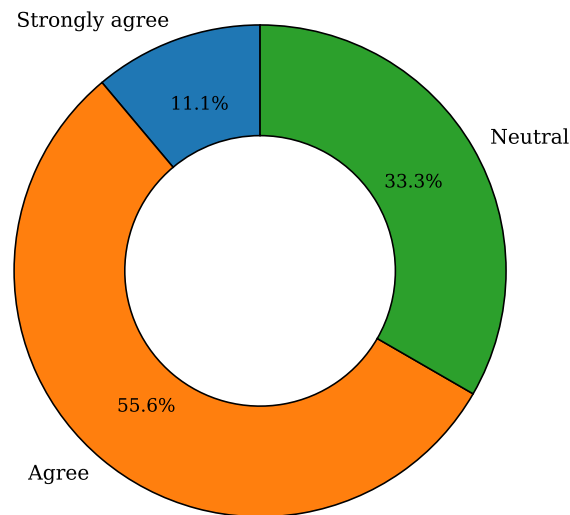


Figure 5. Response distribution for the item linking Papua conflict to perceived injustice (n = 18)

Across the four items, agreement and strong agreement consistently formed the majority response. The strongest combined agreement appeared in the first three civic propositions concerning equal human rights, mutual respect, and justice as fair treatment. The item explicitly

linking conflict in Papua to injustice also showed a majority agreement pattern, although it produced a higher proportion of neutral responses than the first three items. Table 2 summarizes the response counts and percentages across all four substantive questionnaire items.

Table 2. Questionnaire response distribution across the four substantive items

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total n
Everyone deserves the same human rights	10 (55.6%)	4 (22.2%)	4 (22.2%)	0	0	18
Mutual respect and appreciation of differences can help prevent conflict	6 (33.3%)	8 (44.4%)	4 (22.2%)	0	0	18
Justice means fair treatment without discrimination	7 (38.9%)	7 (38.9%)	3 (16.7%)	1 (5.6%)	0	18
The conflict in Papua is related to a sense of injustice	2 (11.1%)	10 (55.6%)	6 (33.3%)	0	0	18

Note. Percentages are item based and may sum to 100.0 after rounding.

The findings indicate that respondents interpreted the issue of Papua through a civic vocabulary of rights, fairness, and respect. This is significant for civic education because it suggests that even a brief school-based inquiry can help students connect a complex national issue to foundational democratic values. At the same time, these results must be interpreted cautiously. Agreement with statements about rights and injustice does not demonstrate mastery of Papua's history or of the legal and political debates surrounding it. What it does reveal is the moral framework through which respondents approached the issue, and that framework is educationally significant.

One important finding is the centrality of human rights as an entry point for discussing national conflict. More than half of the respondents strongly agreed that everyone deserves the same human rights, and none disagreed. This pattern suggests that equal rights functioned as a stable normative principle within the respondent group. In civic education, this matters because

the language of rights can connect abstract constitutional ideals to lived questions of inclusion, safety, and recognition. Human rights education scholars have argued that rights become educationally meaningful when they are taught not as distant legal declarations, but as frameworks for judging whether people are treated with dignity in social and institutional life (Bajaj, 2011; Starkey, 2020). The strong affirmation of equal rights in this study suggests that respondents already possess a baseline moral commitment that educators can deepen through more structured dialogue and evidence-based learning.

This finding also suggests why Benny Wenda's ideas were useful as an interpretive lens. A central feature of Wenda's public advocacy is its refusal to reduce justice to formal legality alone. Instead, it connects justice to lived dignity, safety, and the right to be heard. This orientation resonates with broader human rights scholarship as well as procedural justice theory. Tyler (2006) argues that people are more likely to view authorities as legitimate when they feel they are treated fairly and with respect. Sen (2011), from a different but compatible perspective, emphasizes that justice should be evaluated not only through ideal institutions but also through actual lives and the reduction of remediable injustice. Read together, these perspectives help explain why rights-based language may be intuitively meaningful to students: it translates a complicated conflict into a recognizable civic question about whether people are being treated as full human beings.

A second important finding concerns mutual respect and appreciation of differences. More than three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that these values can help prevent conflict. This pattern is highly relevant to civic education because it suggests that respondents do not understand peace merely as the absence of violence. Rather, they associate peace with an active ethic of recognition. In multicultural and intercultural education, such recognition is central to how learners understand coexistence in diverse societies. Allport's (1954) classic work on prejudice remains useful here because it shows how distrust and stereotyping can harden group boundaries, while contemporary multicultural citizenship scholarship demonstrates that democratic inclusion requires more than passive tolerance. It requires institutional and educational practices that enable people from different backgrounds to recognize one another as legitimate members of a shared polity (Banks, 2008; Mardhiah et al., 2024).

At the same time, the documentary analysis suggests that respect alone is not a sufficient answer. The public and scholarly materials examined in this study show repeatedly that conflict in Papua is not only interpersonal, but also structural. For that reason, Wenda's dignity-centered discourse is read here alongside literature emphasizing development, policy reform, and peacebuilding. Respect may reduce dehumanization and open the possibility of dialogue, but where grievances involve land, representation, inequality, security practices, or historical marginalization, deeper institutional responses are also necessary (Bertrand, 2014; Chasib, 2024; Pamungkas, 2019). This distinction is educationally important. Students need to learn that civility matters, but they also need to understand that conflict often persists when structural injustice remains unresolved. In this sense, the findings support a civic education model that combines interpersonal ethics with institutional analysis.

A third finding concerns the meaning of justice itself. When respondents were asked whether justice means fair treatment without discrimination, nearly four fifths agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests that they did not reduce justice to punishment, order, or mere obedience. Instead, they understood justice relationally, as fair treatment. That orientation is consistent with procedural justice research, which emphasizes the importance of dignity, voice, and neutrality in

how people judge institutions (Tyler, 2006). It is also compatible with Rawls's (1999) conception of fairness as a grounding idea for political order, even if Rawls operates at a more abstract institutional level than the present study. For civic education, this is encouraging because it suggests that school-age learners can already articulate justice as an anti-discrimination principle. The educational task, therefore, is not simply to introduce the concept, but to help learners develop it into more critical and context-sensitive forms.

The Papua case is especially useful in this regard. If justice is understood as fair treatment without discrimination, then a conflict such as Papua invites students to ask what happens when groups perceive that they are excluded, stereotyped, or denied equal recognition. The documentary themes identified in this study consistently framed injustice in Papua in terms of unequal treatment, mistrust, and marginalization, themes that also appear in broader literature on Papua's political development and conflict dynamics (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Bertrand, 2014; Wangge, 2023). The point is not that students can settle these debates through a short questionnaire, but that civic education can use such questions to move them from moral intuition toward reasoned inquiry. Learners can ask not only whether fairness matters, but how unfairness becomes socially consequential.

Another important pattern appears in the item that linked the Papua conflict most directly to injustice. Here, the majority still agreed, but the proportion of neutral responses increased substantially. This suggests that respondents were relatively confident when dealing with general civic principles such as rights, respect, and fair treatment, but less certain when applying those principles to a complex real-world conflict. That hesitation should not be viewed simply as a weakness. It may also indicate an awareness that Papua is a difficult issue requiring more knowledge. From a pedagogical perspective, this is a productive starting point. Civic education should not force premature certainty, but should create space for students to test moral principles against historical evidence, multiple perspectives, and careful discussion.

The higher level of neutrality on the Papua-specific item also reinforces the need for methodological modesty. This study cannot determine how deeply respondents understood the Papua conflict, nor can it identify the precise reasons behind their agreement or neutrality. The results show only that many respondents associated conflict with perceived injustice, while a substantial minority remained uncertain. Even so, that pattern is still meaningful. It indicates that school-based civic learning can surface morally relevant questions even when students do not yet possess extensive factual knowledge. Recognizing this distinction may help teachers design lessons that move from principle to inquiry, for example from the claim that everyone deserves equal rights to the question of what kinds of evidence suggest that rights, dignity, or equal treatment are contested in a particular context.

The study also contributes by using Benny Wenda's ideas in a balanced way. In public debate, advocacy voices are often either romanticized or dismissed, and both responses are educationally limiting. Treating Wenda as beyond criticism would collapse civic learning into political alignment, while dismissing him altogether would erase an important voice through which Papuan experiences of discrimination, fear, and denied recognition have been articulated. This study instead uses his ideas as an interpretive civic lens. That means taking seriously the moral vocabulary of dignity, injustice, and voice present in his advocacy, while also placing that vocabulary in conversation with broader scholarship and alternative approaches centered on dialogue, reform, and inclusive development. Such an approach is consistent with the goals of civic education because it teaches students to engage public arguments critically rather than passively.

In practical terms, the findings suggest at least four implications for civic education. *First*, human rights education should be connected to concrete national issues so that students can see why principles matter. The broad agreement on equal rights in this study suggests that such discussion is accessible even to upper primary learners when appropriately scaffolded. *Second*, teachers should connect fairness to discrimination, voice, and recognition rather than presenting justice only as rule obedience. *Third*, controversial public issues such as Papua should be addressed through structured dialogue rather than avoided altogether. Avoidance may preserve short-term classroom comfort, but it leaves students without the conceptual tools to interpret difficult realities. *Fourth*, *conflict*-sensitive civic education should incorporate both interpersonal and structural analysis. Students need to understand why respect matters, but also why respect alone is insufficient when institutional inequalities persist.

In classroom practice, these findings can be translated into a four-step civic learning sequence. *First*, the teacher introduces a general principle, such as equal rights, fair treatment, or mutual respect, through short age-appropriate prompts. *Second*, students examine a concrete case by reading two or three brief public texts on Papua that represent different emphases, such as rights, dialogue, development, or recognition. *Third*, students engage in structured discussion using guiding questions such as: What seems unfair here? Whose voice is heard? What evidence supports this claim? Which responses are interpersonal, and which are institutional? *Fourth*, students complete a reflective task, such as a short written response, exit ticket, or concept map linking rights, dignity, fairness, and peace. This sequence helps move students from slogan-level agreement to evidence-based civic reasoning while maintaining age appropriateness, balance, and dialogic engagement. Such an approach is especially important for controversial national issues because the educational goal is not premature political certainty, but the development of reasoned judgment, empathy, and democratic discussion.

These implications are consistent with wider scholarship. Osler and Starkey (2003, 2006, 2018) emphasize that citizenship education must move beyond narrow nationalism and prepare learners to negotiate diversity, rights, and justice across multiple scales of belonging. Banks (2008) similarly argues that citizenship education in diverse societies should not erase group identity in the name of assimilation. Peace education research in Indonesia has also shown that conflict resolution learning benefits from inclusive environments, dialogue, and critical reflection (Saleh et al., 2025). In addition, multicultural education scholarship in Indonesia underscores the role of schools in cultivating respect, openness, and competence for living with difference (Mardhiah et al., 2024). The present findings add to these conversations by showing how a concrete national conflict can serve as an anchor for such learning.

The Papua-specific literature further clarifies why civic education must approach the topic carefully. Scholars have documented how historical violence, marginalization, securitization, and inequality complicate efforts to build trust and peaceful integration in Papua (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Bertrand, 2014; Wangge, 2023). Research on well-being gaps and development also suggests that perceptions of exclusion are not merely symbolic, but tied to social and material life (Sollis et al., 2023). At the same time, policy-oriented analyses have stressed that peaceful resolution requires inclusive dialogue, local leadership, social justice, and institutional credibility (Chasib, 2024; Pamungkas, 2019). For that reason, educators should avoid one-dimensional narratives. A civic education treatment of Papua should help students understand that conflict grows where dignity, fairness, and trust are damaged, while also showing that pathways to peace require careful, dialogic, and evidence-informed engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study examined social injustice in Papua through Benny Wenda's ideas and broader scholarship on justice, human rights, and conflict, while also describing how a small group of school respondents understood the relationship among rights, fairness, respect, and conflict. The findings show a consistent pattern. Respondents strongly endorsed the principle of equal human rights, broadly agreed that mutual respect can help prevent conflict, understood justice as fair treatment without discrimination, and generally associated injustice with conflict in Papua. The documentary analysis reinforced these results by showing that public discussion of Papua repeatedly turns on questions of dignity, recognition, exclusion, and dialogue.

The study contributes to civic education in two main ways. *First*, it shows that controversial national issues can be translated into age-appropriate civic inquiry without reducing their complexity. *Second*, it highlights that human rights, fairness, and mutual respect provide productive conceptual entry points for discussing unity in a diverse nation. The study is limited by its small convenience sample, brief instrument, and purposive documentary base. Future research could expand the participant group, include interviews or classroom observation, and examine how structured civic learning on justice and conflict shapes students' understanding over time. The findings suggest that civic education can play an important role in helping young learners connect democratic values to real social questions. In this context, justice is not merely an abstract ideal detached from national life, but a practical condition for trust, peace, and meaningful unity.

This study has several limitations. The respondent group was small, school-based, and not representative. Most respondents were upper primary students, so the findings should be interpreted as age-specific perceptions rather than public opinion. The questionnaire was limited to four attitudinal items and did not include interviews, open-ended responses, or classroom observation. The document corpus was purposive and interpretive rather than comprehensive. For these reasons, the study should be read as an exploratory account of civic meaning-making rather than a definitive account of Papua or of Indonesian public opinion.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that social injustice is significant for civic education because it is not only a moral problem, but also a problem of democratic coexistence. When people believe that they are ignored, humiliated, or denied equal standing, social trust weakens and conflict becomes more likely. The findings do not establish the causes of conflict in Papua in any final sense. They do, however, show that respondents were able to perceive a meaningful relationship between injustice and conflict and to identify rights, fairness, and mutual respect as relevant civic responses. For educators, this provides a useful foundation. It suggests that schools can help students engage difficult public issues without reducing them to slogans, provided that teaching remains dialogic, balanced, and grounded in democratic values.

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