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The Implementation of Pancasila Values through Character Education in the Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the implementation of Pancasila values through Project Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) in the Merdeka Curriculum. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with interviews involving secondary school students, findings show that P5 positively develops students' critical thinking, creativity, independence, and collaboration skills. However, challenges include unclear instructions, excessive workloads, teacher biases, and incomplete integration of Pancasila values, especially religious aspects. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. This study concludes that P5 implementation should holistically integrate all Pancasila values to form students with strong character, national identity, and competencies relevant to 21st-century education.



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Introduction

The phenomenon of increasing cases of intolerance, diminishing manners, and the erosion of the spirit of mutual cooperation among Indonesian youth has become a serious challenge for the education sector today. Schools, as the forefront institutions in shaping national character, have a strategic role in re-embedding the values of Pancasila to form generations with strong integrity and national identity (Fitria, 2024); (Nurfatimah & Dewi, 2021). The values within Pancasila, consisting of Divinity, Humanity, Unity, Democracy, and Social Justice, must be re-embedded in the younger generation's mindset to prepare them for life in an era of rapid globalization and cultural exchange.

As Indonesia's foundational ideology, Pancasila contains not only juridical principles but also moral values that guide the nation's development and the character building of its people (Fitria, 2024); (Sianturi & Dewi, 2021). These values align with the national education goals as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National

Education System, which aims to develop Indonesian citizens who are faithful, morally upright, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and responsible.

Pancasila is not merely the state ideology or a set of legal norms; it is a way of life and a moral compass that guides attitudes and behaviors in society. The internalization of Pancasila values equips students with the moral reasoning needed to navigate complex social realities (Latifah, 2015); (Fitria, 2024). Therefore, its implementation in character education is crucial to form individuals with integrity who uphold national unity amidst the rapid flow of global influences.

Character education based on Pancasila values is currently needed at all levels of life, not only for early childhood and teenagers but also for adults. This is to ensure the formation of citizens who are smart, morally upright, and uphold the dignity of the nation in the era of Society 5.0, where global cultural penetration is inevitable (Nurfatimah & Dewi, 2021); (Fitria, 2024). The development of this awareness requires education that integrates knowledge, moral habituation, and reflective practice on Pancasila's principles.

The Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) introduced by the Indonesian government emphasizes character education alongside academic competence. Through its flagship program, *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5) or the Strengthening of Pancasila Student Profile Project, students are encouraged to implement Pancasila values in real life through project-based learning, cultural appreciation, and problem-solving activities (Widyastuti, 2022); (Patuti et al., 2023). The P5 projects aim to produce lifelong learners who are globally competitive yet rooted in national values.

The implementation of Pancasila values through P5 is carried out holistically and contextually. Students are involved in projects that train them in critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and care for others, all of which reflect the essence of Pancasila. For instance, projects on environmental care, cultural preservation, and community service become avenues for students to live out these values (Widyastuti, 2022); (Patuti et al., 2023).

Character education based on Pancasila must become the foundation of the national education system, as character is the core element in building a dignified nation (Muslich, 2011); (Fitria, 2024). Effective character education will produce individuals who are responsible, tolerant, cooperative, and love their country. These are the ideals embedded in Pancasila that must be realized through systematic educational strategies.

Research by Fitria (2024) highlights that implementing Pancasila values requires synergy between schools, families, and communities through integrated programs and daily habits (Fitria, 2024). Meanwhile, Nurfatimah and Dewi (2021) emphasize that without strengthening national insight through Pancasila education, youth will lose their cultural identity and become vulnerable to negative external influences (Nurfatimah & Dewi, 2021).

The implementation of Pancasila values in character education is a crucial strategy to build an excellent Indonesian generation with a strong moral foundation, national pride, and the ability to contribute positively to global civilization while preserving national identity. This study explores the implementation of Pancasila values through character education embedded in Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum.

Method

Research Design

The design of this research is a descriptive qualitative study, focusing on collecting rich, contextual, and detailed information. This design enables the researcher to describe, interpret, and analyze the data systematically. According to Rohmah and Aliah (2023), a descriptive qualitative design is widely used in Indonesian educational research to elaborate on educational issues comprehensively (Rohmah & Aliah, 2023).

Research Participants

Participants in this study are Secondary School Students who are actively involved in learning activities under the Merdeka Curriculum. The selection of participants is based on purposive sampling to ensure that the informants have sufficient knowledge and experience related to the implementation of Pancasila-based character education. This sampling method aligns with the recommendations for qualitative studies focusing on specific educational settings (Simanjorang et al., 2024).

Data Collection Method

The data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, which facilitate direct interaction between the researcher and participants to obtain comprehensive and subjective insights. According to Hasiara et al. (2020), in-depth interviews are a crucial method in qualitative research to gather authentic information on individuals' values, experiences, and perceptions (Hasiara et al., 2020).

Data Analysis Method

The data analysis was conducted using qualitative descriptive analysis, involving the systematic process of organizing, reducing, interpreting, and verifying the data obtained from interviews. The data were coded and categorized to identify relevant patterns and meanings aligned with the research focus. This approach is consistent with the analytical steps proposed by Ananda and Aslami (2022), who emphasize systematic content analysis in qualitative educational research (Ananda & Aslami, 2022).

Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the research objectives, procedures, and their rights, including voluntary participation and confidentiality. The names of participants in this study were changed to pseudonyms. Written informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews to ensure ethical compliance and protect participants' autonomy. This aligns with standard ethical practices in educational qualitative research in Indonesia (Rohmah & Aliah, 2023).

Results and Discussions

Positive Implementation of P5

The implementation of Project Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) has brought various positive impacts on students' character building. Based on the interview with Adit, he felt surprised at first with the Merdeka Curriculum and P5 because of the increased workload, but he appreciated the practical aspects. He stated, *"I was surprised with this Merdeka Curriculum because we were given so many assignments, but I am grateful because teachers do not only give theories in class, but also provide us with practices"*. This finding aligns with Lukitoyo et al. (2023) who emphasized that the Merdeka Curriculum liberates learning by integrating knowledge and practical activities to foster holistic competencies.

In addition, Lulu reported that although she was initially confused with the unclear instructions, she eventually felt comfortable and enjoyed the projects. She said, *"At first it was confusing because the concept given by the teacher was unclear, but after doing six projects throughout the year, I eventually enjoyed it"*. Furthermore, both informants highlighted that P5 promotes critical thinking and creativity. Adit explained, *"P5 is not only about projects but also encourages students to think critically, creatively, innovatively, and cooperatively while embodying Pancasila values"*. This demonstrates the essence of P5 as a platform for 21st-century skill development integrated with national identity education (Sari et al., 2023).

Lulu also emphasized that P5 enhanced her creativity and independence, as she was required to design, plan, and execute projects with her group without depending on teachers or parents. She stated, *"We were required to create something, come up with new ideas, and work independently because we are high school students, not elementary students who rely on parents or teachers"*.

The implementation of P5 also positively impacts students' social relations. Lulu shared that through entrepreneurship projects, she learned how to communicate with sponsors, draft proposals, and manage events, which broadened her networking. She said, *"For example, when we had an entrepreneurship project, I learned how to propose sponsorships, draft proposals, and make formal requests, and that was all because of P5"*. This finding supports the argument by Agussalim et al. (2023) that Pancasila education should incorporate economic and entrepreneurial learning to foster independent and socially responsible graduates. Moreover, the implementation of P5 enhances students' courage and collaboration skills. Lulu noted, *"Because of P5, I became braver and closer to my friends as we had to collaborate on projects from start to finish"*.

Overall, the implementation of P5 contributes significantly to character development, including creativity, independence, critical thinking, courage, social networking, and collaboration. These findings indicate that P5 aligns with the goal of the Merdeka Curriculum to create holistic graduates who embody the six dimensions of

Pancasila Student Profile, namely faith and devotion to God, independence, cooperation, global diversity, critical reasoning, and creativity (Pulhehe & Robandi, 2024).

Challenges of P5 Implementation

Despite the positive impacts, the implementation of P5 also faces several challenges in schools. Adit mentioned feeling overwhelmed by the excessive assignments given in P5. He stated, *“At first, I was shocked because students were always given tasks continuously”*. This indicates that excessive workloads without adequate guidance can lead to student stress.

Lulu also highlighted the challenge of unclear instructions from teachers during the initial implementation of P5. She said, *“At first it was confusing because the concept given by the teacher was unclear”*. This reflects Tahir et al. (2024)’s finding that teachers are still adapting to the new curriculum, leading to inconsistencies in P5 implementation. Adit also described the issue of teacher bias, where teachers tend to assess students superficially based on appearance rather than effort. He said, *“There is a gap between groups where teachers only see students from their appearances like neatness, without knowing their real efforts”*.

Another challenge is the lack of accessible literature to support P5 projects. Adit explained, *“I also found it difficult to find materials because there were very few articles, journals, or websites with valid content”*. This issue is consistent with Subaidi (2020) who noted that supporting resources are often lacking in implementing contextual Pancasila-based learning.

Conflict among teachers is also evident in P5 implementation. Adit reported tension between young and senior teachers, saying, *“In my school, young teachers lead P5, making senior teachers feel unappreciated or bypassed”*. Finally, Lulu criticized the long duration of P5 projects, which reduces effective time for regular subjects. She stated, *“The duration is too long, spending two weeks just for P5, making class lessons rushed”*.

Pancasila Values

Both informants indicated that while P5 is designed to implement Pancasila values, its realization is still partial. Adit expressed, *“The values of Pancasila are not conveyed clearly, teachers only emphasize theory without practice”*. Lulu noted that some P5 activities effectively implemented Pancasila values, such as the election of OSIS president reflecting the fourth sila (democracy). She explained, *“For example, the OSIS election taught us about democracy from candidate nomination to selection and speech”*. This supports Lukitoyo et al. (2023) who emphasized that Pancasila implementation should be contextualized in school programs.

However, she also mentioned that religious values under the first sila were not included in P5, saying, *“For example, religious activities like reciting Quran are not part of P5”*. This finding is consistent with Pulhehe & Robandi (2024), who argue that comprehensive Pancasila implementation must cover all five sila in learning designs (Pulhehe & Robandi, 2024). Overall, while P5 has the potential to integrate Pancasila values effectively, its implementation must be holistic, not limited to certain dimensions. According to Subaidi (2020), effective Pancasila-based education should integrate faith, humanity, unity, democracy, and justice into all learning activities to produce graduates with strong national identity.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the implementation of Project Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) within the Merdeka Curriculum has brought significant positive impacts on students’ character development. P5 facilitates the growth of critical thinking, creativity, independence, collaboration, and social networking skills, reflecting the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. However, its implementation still faces several challenges, such as excessive workloads, unclear instructions from teachers, limited learning resources, teacher biases, and conflicts between senior and junior teachers. Moreover, the integration of Pancasila values remains partial, with some sila well implemented, such as democracy and cooperation, while others, particularly religious values, are less emphasized in P5 activities. Therefore, it is recommended that P5 programs be designed holistically to integrate all Pancasila values in practical, contextual learning activities. Strengthening teacher competence, providing adequate resources, and ensuring fair implementation are crucial to achieving the goal of producing students with strong moral character, national identity, and competencies aligned with the demands of the 21st century and Indonesian educational ideals.

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