

CLASSROOM-BASED PANCASILA CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL TROPICAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the implementation of classroom-based Pancasila character education in rural primary schools as a strategic approach to sustainable human development in tropical communities. A qualitative descriptive method was used, with data collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, and document analysis of lesson plans and character education materials. Data were analyzed manually through thematic coding using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings show that classroom-based character education practices are contextually integrated with local wisdom and community culture. Pancasila values such as mutual cooperation, nationalism, and religious tolerance are applied through storytelling, collaborative projects, and reflective dialogues. Despite limited infrastructure and resources, schools demonstrate innovative approaches in fostering students' moral and civic competencies. This study contributes to the fields of education and sustainable development by emphasizing the importance of contextual character education in shaping responsible, community-oriented individuals. The integration of national ideology with locally grounded pedagogical strategies proves effective in supporting character development and social sustainability in rural tropical areas.

Keywords: Pancasila character education, classroom-based learning, rural primary schools, sustainable development, local wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central issue in the discourse of sustainable human development, particularly in developing countries with high cultural diversity, such as Indonesia. In this context, character education functions not only as a moral instrument but also

as a national strategy essential for strengthening social cohesion and shaping citizens with integrity. This is increasingly significant given today's global challenges, which are not only economic and technological in nature but also involve a crisis of values and national identity. Pancasila character education is expected to address the impacts of globalization that erode local values (Lickona & Davidson, 2005).

As the philosophical foundation of the nation, Pancasila offers a normative and ideological basis for implementing character education that responds to contemporary needs. Moreover, primary education plays a fundamental role in laying the groundwork for values and behaviors from an early age. Therefore, it is important to explore how Pancasila character education can be effectively implemented in primary schools, especially in rural areas that possess unique socio-cultural characteristics. It is crucial to understand that character education is not merely about teaching values but is a comprehensive process involving all community elements. This aligns with the view that character education must be a collaborative effort between schools, families, and communities to create an environment conducive to character development (Ni'mah et al., 2024).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of character education in supporting sustainable development (Anderson Ndolu et al., 2022). Character education is seen as a process that not only forms knowledgeable individuals but also individuals with ethics, empathy, and concern for others and the environment. However, most studies have focused on urban areas with relatively sufficient infrastructure and resources (Juntak et al., 2023). In urban contexts, character education is often developed through structured curricula and well-planned school programs. Meanwhile, the dynamics of character education in rural primary schools—often challenged by limited facilities, teaching staff, and access to information—remain underexplored academically. Rural communities, in fact, possess a wealth of local values that have great potential to support the internalization of Pancasila values through a culturally grounded and meaningful contextual approach for students.

This gap in the literature indicates the need to explore how classroom-based Pancasila character education strategies can be developed and adapted to the local characteristics of rural communities (Nurpratiwiningsih & Juhadi, n.d.). Most existing character education models are top-down in nature, lacking consideration of the local context where students grow and develop. This also responds to criticism of normative character education models that are overly compliance-oriented and less relevant to students' real-life experiences (Fauziyah et al., 2020). Therefore, this study focuses on the classroom-based practice of Pancasila character education within rural primary schools in tropical regions as part of a broader strategy for sustainable human development.

An ideal character education program should not only target cognitive domains but also address affective and psychomotor aspects of students. These three domains are integral dimensions of a balanced and holistic education. In rural communities that still uphold family values, religiosity, and mutual cooperation, character education can serve as a strategic platform to reinforce those values within the school environment. One of the main challenges in implementing character education in rural areas is the lack of systemic support in terms of policy, teacher training, and the development of locally-based curricula. Rural teachers often have to design creative approaches on their own to ensure contextual and meaningful learning, despite limited resources (Mawardi et al., 2020). This highlights the urgent need for policymakers to actively support teacher initiatives in remote areas.

Furthermore, rural tropical communities have unique characteristics that make them important sites for exploring character education practices. For instance, in agrarian societies such as those in Central Java, intergenerational social interaction, traditional customs, and religious practices play an important role in shaping children's character. Rural children typically have closer relationships with their parents and community, receiving direct moral

modeling in everyday life. The natural environment that supports agriculture also offers opportunities to introduce character education that emphasizes environmental sustainability. This is in line with the concept of sustainable human development, which stresses not only economic aspects but also the enhancement of citizens' social, moral, and spiritual capacities (Anderson Ndolu et al., 2022). Therefore, character education practices in rural areas must be rooted in the distinct potential and realities of local life.

As a national ideology, Pancasila holds a crucial position in character education due to its five core values that provide a moral framework for students from an early age. These values—Belief in God, Humanity, Unity, Democracy, and Social Justice—when internalized effectively, can nurture a civilized and responsible generation. The implementation of Pancasila values in primary education should not be mechanical or symbolic but should involve deep engagement through daily classroom and school life. This process requires teachers to serve as value facilitators rather than mere content deliverers. This underscores the need to strengthen teacher capacity, develop contextual teaching materials, and encourage community involvement to support character learning (Kentli, 2015). Collaboration among schools, parents, and communities is key to the successful internalization of Pancasila values.

Conceptually, the classroom-based character education approach employed in this study refers to the integration of character values into daily teaching practices rather than treating them as separate subjects. This approach is considered more effective in cultivating students' positive attitudes and behaviors because values are consistently embedded in teacher-student, student-student, and student-content interactions. Such learning experiences allow students to directly practice values such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation through classroom activities. It also aligns with the principle of the "hidden curriculum," where values are conveyed through classroom culture, school policies, and social communication practices within the learning environment (Maharani & Muhtar, 2022). In other words, character education occurs implicitly but has a strong influence on personality development.

In tropical communities facing challenges such as climate change, structural poverty, and unequal access to education, locally contextualized character education can serve as a strategy to build social resilience. Social resilience here refers to the ability of individuals and communities to survive, grow, and adapt in the face of adversity. Human development cannot be separated from educational processes that shape responsible, adaptive, and competitive citizens. Therefore, character education in rural primary schools deserves greater attention in national education policy, academic research, and regional development programs (Malaka, Safrizal, Sanusi, Ruslan, 2020). Developing a curriculum responsive to local realities and providing need-based teacher training are important steps to be pursued collectively.

This research is also significant in its effort to document and analyze best practices carried out by teachers in rural primary schools. These practices are often not systematically recorded, making replication and further development difficult. Yet learning from real-life experiences in the field is essential for developing contextual character education models. This study contributes by describing the internalization process of Pancasila values in classroom learning, how those values are interpreted in local contexts, and how this process influences students' character formation. Through this exploration, it is expected that relevant and effective approaches for similar contexts will emerge (Yutri Wahyuni, 2024). The findings may also enrich both the academic discourse and the practice of character education at the national level.

Methodologically, this study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, which enables an in-depth exploration of character education phenomena within natural settings. The aim is not to generalize but to deeply understand the processes occurring in the classroom. The research focuses on meaning, experience, and social interaction in the learning space, and how teachers and students interpret Pancasila values in their daily teaching practices. The results

are expected to provide theoretical, practical, and policy implications for both primary education and policymakers in designing locally based character development strategies (Sugiyono, 2016). It also offers new insights into how character education can be developed contextually and participatively.

Furthermore, the findings from this study can inform the development of teacher training models, contextual teaching materials, and community-based character education policies. In the long run, classroom-based and contextually grounded Pancasila character education is expected to nurture a young generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally upright, socially empathetic, and environmentally conscious—all of which are essential components of sustainable human development (Dr. Nursalam & Dr. Suardi, 2016). Thus, character education becomes not only a part of the formal curriculum but also the heart of grassroots social transformation.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative descriptive research employing a field-based case study approach, aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the classroom-based implementation of Pancasila character education in a rural primary school. The research was conducted at SD Negeri Harjosari Lor 1, located in the tropical rural area of Brebes Regency, Central Java. The site was purposively selected based on several criteria: the school's active integration of Pancasila values into teaching and learning processes, its socio-cultural rural context, and its strong commitment to strengthening students' character.

The research subjects included the school principal, three classroom teachers, and two religious education teachers, all of whom were directly involved in the planning and implementation of character education. Data were collected using three main techniques: classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to capture the implementation of classroom learning practices, particularly those related to the delivery of character values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), tolerance, nationalism, and religiosity. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format using an interview guide developed based on the indicators of the Pancasila Student Profile by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbud, 2020), and were recorded using an audio recorder. In addition, document analysis was carried out on Lesson Plans (RPP), character education modules, and documentation of school activities related to character strengthening.

The collected data were manually analyzed using a thematic analysis approach based on the model by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction was conducted by selecting relevant information according to specific themes, data were presented in descriptive narrative form, and conclusions were drawn through the identification of patterns and meanings within the findings.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws upon Lickona's (1991) theory of character education, Johnson's (2002) theory of contextual learning, and the conceptual framework of the Pancasila Student Profile (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). This research is grounded in the assumption that effective character education can be developed through classroom-based learning contextualized within local values and supported by reflective and participatory pedagogical approaches. To ensure the validity of the data, source and methodological triangulation were employed by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and document analysis. Additionally, data validation was performed through the member-check technique, by seeking confirmation from participants regarding the researcher's interpretations to ensure the accuracy and consistency of meaning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study produced three key findings related to the classroom-based implementation of Pancasila character education in rural primary schools. These findings address the research question regarding how Pancasila values are integrated into classroom instruction and how such integration contributes to sustainable human development in tropical rural communities.

1. Integration of Pancasila Values into Classroom Learning

The results of classroom observations revealed that teachers actively integrated Pancasila values into subjects such as Civics Education (PPKn), Indonesian Language, and Religious Education. Values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), nationalism, and religiosity were frequently reflected in group discussions, school clean-up activities, and post-lesson reflections. The most commonly used strategies included storytelling featuring exemplary figures, reflective dialogue, and simple project-based learning.

A concrete example of this practice was observed in a thematic learning activity involving a fruit salad project by fourth and fifth-grade students. This project served as a contextual learning initiative that integrated lessons on healthy living, group collaboration, and responsibility. During the activity, students were divided into small groups to independently plan, prepare, and present their fruit salads, all under the direct guidance of the classroom teacher.



Figure 1. Students' Fruit Salad Project Created Under Teacher Supervision

Figure 1 illustrates both the process and final result of the project. This activity not only reinforced students' understanding of the lesson content but also instilled values such as *gotong royong* (cooperation during ingredient preparation), independence (making group decisions), and religiosity (praying before starting the activity). The teacher also used this opportunity to teach the importance of healthy food and hygiene—core elements of the value of responsibility toward oneself and the environment.

2. The Role of Local Wisdom in Character Strengthening

Local wisdom serves as an important medium for delivering Pancasila values in a contextual manner. In this regard, teachers drew upon local cultural practices such as *selamatan desa* (village communal feasts), the use of respectful Javanese language (*bahasa Jawa halus*), and community cooperation during harvest seasons as concrete examples for character education.

The following table summarizes the integration of Pancasila values into classroom learning based on observational data:

Table 1. Forms of Pancasila Value Integration in Classroom Learning at SD Harjosari Lor 1

Pancasila Value	Method Integration	of Example	Classroom Activity
Mutual Cooperation (<i>Gotong Royong</i>)	Group Project	Making fruit salad collaboratively	
Nationalism	Local historical storytelling	Journal writing about regional heroes	
Religiosity	Reflection and communal prayer	Praying before lessons and project work	
Humanity	Role play	Simulating helping a friend in need	
Social Justice	Thematic discussions	Discussing students' rights and responsibilities	

(Source: Field observations, 2025)

3. Contribution to Sustainable Human Development

The implementation of character-based learning provides a meaningful contribution to sustainable human development in tropical rural communities. Activities such as fruit salad making not only promote life skills and teamwork but also create impactful learning experiences that foster responsibility and social awareness.

Character education rooted in local values and real-life classroom activities has proven effective in shaping students with integrity, a strong sense of cooperation, and patriotism. This supports the perspective that contextual character education is a key strategy in nurturing active and responsible citizens—especially in promoting social sustainability in tropical regions that remain vulnerable to development disparities (Tilaar, 2015; UNESCO, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the classroom-based implementation of Pancasila character education in rural primary schools can serve as an effective strategy for shaping student profiles with strong character and supporting sustainable human development in tropical communities. Pancasila values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), nationalism, religiosity, and social justice were successfully integrated into learning activities through thematic approaches, collaborative projects, and the utilization of local wisdom.

The findings reveal that character education practices do not need to be top-down or formalistic, but can be developed through meaningful learning experiences that are relevant to students' lives and grounded in the culture and traditions of the local community. Teachers play a central role in creating a classroom atmosphere that fosters moral reflection, social empathy, and personal responsibility.

The future potential of this research lies in the application of contextual character education models in other schools with diverse socio-cultural settings. Further studies may focus on developing locally-based character assessment instruments, strengthening community involvement in character learning, and exploring the integration of Pancasila character education within the *Merdeka Curriculum* in a systemic and sustainable manner.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the writing or publication of this article.

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