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Implementation of Pancasila Education Learning in Achieving Student Learning Outcomes under the Independent Curriculum at State Junior High School 5 Ambon

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Abstract
The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) at the junior high school level aims to cultivate student character grounded in Pancasila values through active, contextual, and project-based learning. In practice, however, the instruction of Pancasila Education continues to encounter significant field challenges, including resource constraints, varying levels of teacher readiness, and low student engagement. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Pancasila Education within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon and evaluate its impact on student learning outcomes and character formation. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participatory observations, and document analysis. The research participants comprised two Pancasila Education teachers, one *Guru Penggerak* (Teacher Mover), the school principal, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, and four students (two seventh-graders and two eighth-graders). The findings reveal that teachers have adopted innovative pedagogical strategies, such as project-based learning, case studies, value-based discussions, and critical reflection, that contextualize Pancasila values within students' daily lives. Nevertheless, implementation is hindered by limited textbook availability, inadequate technological infrastructure, and students' lack of familiarity with active learning paradigms. Despite these barriers, the curriculum demonstrates substantial potential in fostering character development and deepening students' comprehension of Pancasila principles. In conclusion, the integration of Pancasila Education under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* positively influences student learning outcomes. Optimizing its effectiveness requires sustained teacher professional development, the provision of contextualized learning resources, strengthened school culture, proactive internal policy support from school leadership, and greater parental involvement.

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Introduction

A primary challenge for contemporary education in the era of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution is equipping students with strong moral character alongside cognitive competencies. Amidst pervasive moral crises, shifting societal ideals, and the rapid proliferation of digital information, character education has become an urgent global priority. International bodies such as the OECD and UNESCO underscore the necessity of fostering global citizenship to prepare learners for 21st-century demands, including critical thinking, intercultural communication, and an awareness of global challenges (Situmorang, 2025). This global imperative reinforces Indonesia's educational policy orientation, which anchors student character development fundamentally in the philosophical values of Pancasila.

To address these modern educational demands, the Indonesian government introduced the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, emphasizing student-centered pedagogy, differentiated instruction, and character building through the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology [MoECRT], 2022). Core tenets such as global diversity, collaborative inquiry, and learner autonomy form the foundation of this learning experience. However, translating the *Kurikulum Merdeka* into classroom practice within Pancasila and Civic Education (*Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* [PPKn]) remains fraught with difficulties. Many educators struggle to integrate abstract character values into contextualized, meaningful learning activities. These challenges are exacerbated by limited mastery of value-based pedagogical methodologies, insufficient technical training on the new curriculum, and inconsistent institutional support across educational units. Prior empirical evidence indicates that implementing the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5) effectively nurtures junior high school students' character and equips them to navigate dynamic societal shifts (Patuti et al., 2023).

At SMP Negeri 5 Ambon, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* was initiated in the 2022/2023 academic year, beginning with seventh-grade cohorts. Preliminary observations and consultations with Pancasila Education teachers revealed several critical instructional bottlenecks. Educators reported difficulties in operationalizing competency-based assessments and demonstrated limited proficiency in facilitating project-based and discussion-driven learning, resulting in a continued reliance on conventional lecture methods. Furthermore, several teachers had not received formal training on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Student-related barriers, such as low intrinsic motivation, passive classroom behavior, and inequitable access to textbooks, further impeded instructional efficacy. Mid-term evaluation records underscored these challenges, revealing that only 14 out of 32 students achieved scores above the Minimum Mastery Criteria (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* [KKM]) of 75. This empirical baseline indicates that Pancasila

Education instruction has not yet reached optimal effectiveness and requires targeted enhancements in pedagogical strategy, learning resources, and student engagement.

Recent scholarship confirms that implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Pancasila Education involves complex pedagogical and evaluative hurdles. Wantiana and Mellisa (2023) observed that internalizing Pancasila values in primary schools is frequently obstructed by inadequate teacher training and scarce instructional materials. Similarly, Pebriani et al. (2025) highlighted the difficulties educators face when designing authentic assessments aligned with diverse student characteristics and local educational contexts, while Rosidah et al. (2021) noted that administrative burdens and a lack of technical guidelines undermine value-based assessment. Conversely, Jusita (2019) demonstrated that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) significantly enhances student participation and academic achievement while embedding national values through experiential tasks. Furthermore, Sidabutar (2024) emphasized the necessity of incorporating local wisdom into educational materials to strengthen cultural identity and the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*.

While extensive research has examined general barriers to *Kurikulum Merdeka* adoption—such as challenges in differentiated Indonesian language instruction (Melani & Gani, 2023) and broad curricular adjustments in Civic Education (Santoso et al., 2024)—empirical studies specifically investigating value-centered Pancasila Education at public junior high schools in Eastern Indonesia's archipelagic regions remain scarce. This study addresses this gap by examining how teachers operationalize moral and civic values directly within classrooms at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon. Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse on character-based civic pedagogy within resource-constrained island contexts. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights into teacher challenges, adaptive instructional strategies, and student responses, providing an empirical foundation for policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators seeking to formulate more context-responsive implementation frameworks.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Pancasila Education under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon, focusing specifically on (1) the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers, (2) the institutional and classroom challenges encountered, and (3) the resulting impact on students' character development and civic learning outcomes.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to gain an in-depth, holistic understanding of Pancasila Education implementation under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon. Participants were selected via snowball sampling based on their direct involvement in curriculum execution, comprising two Pancasila

Education teachers, the school principal, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, one *Guru Penggerak* (Teacher Mover), and four students (two seventh-graders and two eighth-graders). Data were gathered through three complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews to capture participants' experiences and perceptions, non-participatory classroom observations to examine real-time instructional dynamics, and document analysis of teaching modules, assessment records, and school curriculum policies. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014, as cited in Rivaldo et al., 2024), encompassing three concurrent and iterative stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure trustworthiness and internal validity, source triangulation was conducted by cross-checking findings across interviews, observational field notes, and institutional documents.

Results and Discussion

Results

Teacher Readiness in Implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Analysis of observational data, interviews, and institutional records indicates that SMP Negeri 5 Ambon commenced its adoption of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the 2022/2023 academic year under the *Mandiri Berubah* (Independent Change) category. By the 2023–2024 academic year, implementation expanded progressively from the seventh to the eighth grade through a phased rollout designed collaboratively by the principal, curriculum coordinators, senior teachers, and subject educators. To prepare for this transition, teachers participated in professional development workshops on the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and independently developed teaching modules tailored to student demographics and learning needs. Prior to commencing instructional units, teachers administered diagnostic assessments to map students' baseline readiness, interests, and foundational competencies. Document reviews further confirmed that educators compiled foundational learning materials adapted to local socio-cultural contexts and surrounding environmental resources.

Pedagogical strategies in pancasila education. Interview findings reveal that Pancasila Education at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon utilizes flexible, student-centered, and project-oriented methodologies. Teachers have transitioned from serving as primary transmitters of knowledge to acting as facilitators who stimulate critical thinking, open dialogue, and student voice. As one teacher, Ms. Mainake, noted:

> *"Instruction under the Kurikulum Merdeka centers on the students, allowing us to adapt our pedagogical methods to accommodate their individual needs."* (Mainake, personal interview, August 28, 2024)

The instructional models deployed include differentiated learning, Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and reflective character-building activities. Seventh-grade teachers integrated experiential learning opportunities, such as educational visits to local historical landmarks, to deepen students' appreciation of national principles. Concurrently, eighth-grade instruction, as described by Ms. Tetelepta. It was structured into three systematic phases: (1) *preliminary activities* (prayer, attendance, classroom readiness checks, singing national anthems, and stating learning objectives); (2) *core activities* (observation, group discussion, student presentations, and teacher validation); and (3) *closing activities* (critical reflection, assignment of follow-up tasks, and closing prayer). Across all sessions, educators deliberately cultivated core values such as responsibility, teamwork (*gotong royong*), and tolerance. Mr. Samaleleway emphasized that these civic virtues are embedded consistently into every lesson plan.

Students responded favorably to the participatory pedagogical shifts introduced by the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, reporting heightened engagement due to increased opportunities for dialogue and self-expression. Excel, an eighth-grade student, remarked: *"I feel much more motivated because we are given the space to speak up and think independently before the teacher explains the material."* (Excel, personal interview, August 28, 2024). Fellow students, Alexander and Michael, similarly expressed appreciation for learning activities that fostered independent reasoning and peer collaboration. These student perspectives align with Ms. Waas's assertion that Pancasila Education must prioritize students' moral and ethical dimensions rather than focusing exclusively on cognitive memorization. Additionally, Ms. Wurleta emphasized that instructional efficacy relies heavily on positive teacher-student rapport and the contextualization of learning materials within students' lived experiences.

Implementation constraints and classroom challenges. Despite ongoing pedagogical innovations, educators and learners encountered substantial operational barriers. Teachers frequently cited inadequate instructional infrastructure most notably severe shortages of printed textbooks and unreliable internet connectivity, as major obstacles to fostering independent inquiry and integrating digital technology. Classroom management also posed significant difficulties. Unproductive classroom climates, disruptive student behavior, and varying levels of foundational literacy, including students with reading difficulties or special learning needs, impeded lesson delivery. Ms. Tetelepta observed that many students required intensive scaffolding because they had not yet mastered basic foundational concepts, forcing teachers to repeatedly review prior material and adjust instructional pacing.

Institutional support and teacher adaptive strategies. To mitigate these constraints, school leadership implemented supportive internal policies, including subsidizing photocopied learning materials, organizing targeted in-house teacher training, and providing continuous pedagogical mentoring. Lead teachers (*Guru Penggerak*) played a

pivotal role in designing contextualized teaching modules and modeling active learning strategies such as PjBL and discovery learning. Furthermore, several teachers exercised pedagogical creativity by utilizing locally available media, incorporating basic offline electronic devices, and providing individualized remedial attention to struggling learners. Through these adaptive measures, educators strove to cultivate an inclusive, supportive learning environment conducive to equitable student participation.

Table 1. Key Thematic Findings on the Implementation of Pancasila Education at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon

Thematic Category	Summary of Empirical Findings	Key Informants
Teacher Readiness	Teachers completed curriculum training, designed bespoke teaching modules, and administered pre-instructional diagnostic assessments.	Teachers, School Principal
Pedagogical Strategies	Adoption of project-based, differentiated, experiential, and value-oriented instructional models.	Grade VII & VIII Teachers
Character Internalization	Systematic cultivation of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), personal responsibility, and intergroup tolerance.	Pancasila Education Teachers
Student Responses	Increased enthusiasm, active participation in peer discussions, and enhanced confidence in expressing opinions.	Students
Implementation Barriers	Scarcity of textbooks, unstable internet access, non-conducive classroom environments, and varied student literacy levels.	Teachers, Students
Adaptive Strategies	Development of localized modules, utilization of low-tech/local media, and targeted scaffolding for struggling learners.	*Guru Penggerak* (Teacher Mover)

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that SMP Negeri 5 Ambon has initiated a meaningful pedagogical shift in Pancasila Education toward value-oriented, project-based, and dialogic instruction. While these efforts reflect teachers' commitment to making Pancasila principles relevant to students' lives, actual implementation remains uneven due to infrastructural deficits, uneven teacher readiness in module design, and persistent student passivity in certain domains. This discrepancy highlights a persistent gap between curricular ideals and classroom realities, warranting closer examination through established theoretical frameworks and comparative literature.

Pedagogical strategies in *kurikulum merdeka* implementation. Civic and character education fundamentally shapes students' socio-moral competencies. By emphasizing active, reflective, and value-driven strategies, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* repositions Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a primary vehicle for empowering students to assume active, accountable roles in their learning (Makmun et al., 2023), thereby enhancing both

engagement and academic performance (Saputra et al., 2025). Anchoring these projects in local wisdom further strengthens the personal relevance of character values, transforming teachers from lecturers into learning facilitators (Wahidah et al., 2023).

This pedagogical orientation aligns closely with constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experiential engagement and social interaction (Fatimah, 2020). Encouraging students to analyze civic dilemmas independently fosters higher-order critical thinking. Moreover, integrating digital media can enrich this constructivist environment by making instruction more interactive and accessible (Belva et al., 2024). Equally critical is professional collaboration among educators; as demonstrated by Civic Education Subject Teacher Forums (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran* [MGMP]) in East Lombok, peer learning communities provide vital spaces for sharing best practices and strengthening pedagogical competence (Laili et al., 2023). Collectively, these strategies are indispensable for cultivating reflective, adaptable learners who embody Pancasila ideals.

Institutional and infrastructural constraints. The barriers observed at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon, specifically scarce digital infrastructure, limited teacher proficiency in designing differentiated modules and diagnostic assessments, and lingering student passivity, reflect a broader deficiency in integrating Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). The TPACK framework asserts that effective modern teaching requires the seamless synthesis of subject matter expertise, pedagogical strategy, and technological integration, rather than isolated technical skills.

These findings resonate with Ismail and Putri Edi (2025), who reported that Civic Education teachers at SMP Negeri 16 Mataram struggled to implement TPACK-based differentiated instruction due to limited subject-specific training and inadequate technological facilities. Comparable constraints were documented by Indah et al. (2024) in Indonesia's frontier, outermost, and least developed (*3T*) regions, where unreliable networks and a lack of comprehensive transition guidance from the 2013 Curriculum forced teachers to develop materials with minimal conceptual support. Although Ambon is an urban center rather than a designated *3T* region, its public schools experience remarkably similar infrastructural and capacity bottlenecks. Addressing these systemic challenges requires sustained, context-sensitive mentoring, equitable resource allocation, and policies tailored to the realities of Eastern Indonesian schools.

Dynamics of student engagement. Student responses to the *Kurikulum Merdeka* revealed a nuanced behavioral dynamic: learners exhibited high enthusiasm and agency during hands-on projects, presentations, and field explorations, yet remained noticeably passive during abstract discussions centered on moral values. This pattern aligns with Student Engagement Theory, which emphasizes that varied, experiential, and self-regulated learning activities are essential for sustaining behavioral and emotional motivation (Aripin et al., 2023). This is further corroborated by Angga et al. (2022), who

found that 21st-century skill-oriented instruction accelerates both student involvement and character internalization. Nevertheless, as Batu Bara et al. (2025) and Subhan et al. (2024) caution, teacher preparedness and a supportive classroom climate remain decisive mediators of cognitive and emotional engagement. Consequently, educators must refine dialogic scaffolding techniques to ensure students engage as deeply with ethical reflection as they do with practical project tasks.

Comparison with previous literature. This study confirms a broader national transition in Civic Education from didactic lecturing toward participatory, project-based pedagogy, corroborating the findings of Wahidah et al. (2023) and Makmun et al. (2023). However, it extends existing scholarship by illuminating how Pancasila values are negotiated in daily classroom interactions within Eastern Indonesia. While Ismail and Putri Edi (2025) and Indah et al. (2024) situated TPACK and authentic assessment challenges primarily within *3T* or central Indonesian contexts, our findings demonstrate that comparable technological and evaluative hurdles persist in archipelagic urban schools, underscoring Ida's (2021) call for authentic, active assessment reforms. Furthermore, whereas Wantiana and Mellisa (2023) observed weak affective outcomes during curriculum implementation, our results demonstrate that integrating local cultural contexts and small-group reflection (Lusty et al., 2022; Aisyah, 2025; Angga et al., 2022) can effectively stimulate emotional engagement. Thus, this study contributes an integrated perspective on combining character values, low-tech adaptability, and reflective pedagogy in an under-researched geographical region.

Several methodological limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, as a single-site case study conducted at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon, the generalizability of the findings to schools with different socio-cultural demographics or resource profiles is limited. Second, although non-participatory observations were conducted, data collection relied heavily on self-reported perceptions from semi-structured interviews, which may not fully capture longitudinal shifts in classroom interactions over an entire academic year. Third, the purely qualitative design lacked complementary quantitative metrics, such as standardized pre- and post-intervention assessments of student character and academic achievement. That could further strengthen empirical triangulation.

Theoretically, this study advances constructivist educational literature by demonstrating that character-based curriculum reform can function effectively even within resource-constrained environments (Gultom, 2025). It suggests that successful value-based instruction depends less on advanced technological infrastructure and more on teachers' pedagogical creativity and capacity to contextualize curricular mandates within learners' lived realities. Practically, these insights provide a roadmap for school leaders, policymakers, and teacher educators. Continuous professional development programs, particularly in Eastern Indonesia. It must prioritize practical training in TPACK

integration, differentiated module design, and dialogic value facilitation. Simultaneously, educational authorities must ensure equitable distribution of foundational learning resources, including updated textbooks and reliable digital infrastructure, to guarantee that the *Kurikulum Merdeka* delivers inclusive and high-quality civic education across all regions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of Pancasila Education under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMP Negeri 5 Ambon has successfully transitioned toward value-oriented and project-based methodologies, despite persistent barriers related to teacher readiness, textbook and technological shortages, and diverse student literacy needs. Crucially, teachers' adaptive, student-centered strategies have proven effective in fostering active student engagement and internalizing core Pancasila principles. The primary contribution of this research lies in empirically validating that contextualized, character-driven pedagogy can yield positive educational outcomes even in resource-limited archipelagic settings. These findings enrich the scholarly literature on civic and character education in Eastern Indonesia and provide an empirical foundation for designing more inclusive, context-responsive educational policies.

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Authors' Note

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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