

Internalization of Pancasila Values Through an Ethnographic Approach in Civics Education (PPKn) in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The internalization of Pancasila values is crucial for shaping elementary students' character. However, because instruction remains heavily cognitive, this internalization is often suboptimal. This study aims to describe: (1) the process of internalizing Pancasila values in Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn), (2) the implementation of an ethnographic approach, (3) supporting school culture, (4) facilitating and inhibiting factors, and (5) the impact on students' behaviors. Employing a qualitative ethnographic design, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis from purposively selected subjects, including the principal, teachers, and students. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, and validity was ensured through triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal that internalization occurs through habituation, role modeling, reflection, discussion, and problem-solving integrated into instruction. The ethnographic approach leverages local culture, traditions, and social environments as contextual learning resources. A positive school culture featuring religious practices, mutual cooperation, and discipline further reinforces these values. Supporting factors include leadership commitment and community participation, while digital media influence and limited time act as barriers. Ultimately, this approach successfully fosters religious attitudes, responsibility, tolerance, discipline, mutual cooperation, and patriotism among students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pancasila serves as the foundation of the state, the national ideology, and the guiding philosophy of the Indonesian people, embodying fundamental values that act as a guide for life within society, the nation, and the state. These values comprising belief in the Divine, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice need to be instilled from an early age through the educational process. Primary school represents a strategic level of education for shaping students' character, as this is a phase characterized by rapid moral, social, and emotional development. Consequently, instruction in Pancasila and Civic

Education (PPKn) plays a crucial role in systematically and sustainably internalizing Pancasila values among students (Hernawati, 2024).

However, reality shows that the implementation of Pancasila values in students' lives still faces various challenges. The phenomenon of declining tolerance, increasing bullying, low social awareness, a lack of responsibility, and the negative influence of technological developments and social media are indicators that the internalization of Pancasila values has not been optimal. This situation indicates a gap between the objectives of Civics and Citizenship Education (PPKn) learning and the daily practices of students. Various studies also confirm that Pancasila-based character education still requires more contextual and meaningful learning strategies so that students not only understand the concepts cognitively but also are able to internalize and apply them in real life (Sasi, 2025).

To date, PPKn learning in elementary schools has tended to be oriented toward mastering material and memorizing civic concepts. This learning approach results in students acquiring more knowledge about Pancasila than experiencing the process of forming attitudes and behaviors based on these values. In fact, the essence of internalizing values is the process of instilling values until they become part of one's personality through real-life experiences, role models, habituation, and continuous social interaction (Zahra, 2026).

One approach considered relevant for addressing this issue is the ethnographic approach to instruction. This approach positions local culture as a learning resource, enabling students to understand Pancasila values through the social and cultural realities they encounter in their daily lives. By observing community traditions, practices such as mutual cooperation and deliberation, inter-citizen tolerance, and other local cultural practices, students gain authentic learning experiences; consequently, Pancasila values are no longer perceived merely as abstract concepts but become an integral part of the lived culture they experience firsthand.

The ethnographic approach also aligns with the contextual learning paradigm, which emphasizes the connection between learning material and the students' socio-cultural environment. From a constructivist perspective, students' cultural experiences serve as a foundation for constructing knowledge and shaping character. Furthermore, utilizing local culture as a medium for value internalization strengthens national identity without disregarding Indonesia's cultural diversity. Research on local culture-based character internalization indicates that integrating local culture into instruction enhances the effectiveness of character education, as students learn through cultural practices that are already active within the community (Irsan, 2022).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) holds a central position in Indonesia's national education system, serving as a primary vehicle for nation- and character-building (Saputra et al, 2023). However, a major challenge in PPKn instruction at the primary school level is the shift in orientation from fostering affective qualities and behavioral traits, specifically value internalization, toward a focus solely on cognitive achievement. To address this, contextual and local culture-based learning approaches, such as the ethnographic approach, are essential to ensure that students genuinely internalize the noble values of Pancasila (Atmojo et al., 2021).

2.1. The Nature of Value Internalization in Elementary Education

Value internalization is a conscious process in which an individual incorporates moral, social, and ethical values into their personal belief system, ultimately guiding their daily actions and behavior (Mayasari et al., 2021). During primary school (ages 7–12), children are in a stage of concrete moral development. Therefore, instilling Pancasila values cannot be achieved merely through theoretical lectures; instead, it requires habituation, modeling, and direct experiences integrated into learning activities (Salsabila, 2025).

Value internalization does not happen instantly, it unfolds through psychological stages proposed by experts, ranging from value transformation and value transaction to transinternalization (Muhammad et al., 2025). At the transinternalization stage, values are not merely understood or practiced under teacher supervision, instead, they become integrated into the student's personality and serve as autonomous guiding principles for life. In primary education, success at this stage depends heavily on the consistency of the emotional climate educators foster, where warm teacher-student relationships serve as an effective conduit for transmitting moral values (Puspasari et al., 2026).

2.2 Ethnographic Approach as a Contextual Instructional Strategy

The ethnographic approach in education uses an anthropological perspective to understand learners' cultures, traditions, and social realities. When applied to Civics (PPKn) instruction, this approach bridges the gap between Pancasila's abstract concepts and students' everyday realities in their communities. By utilizing local wisdom, the tradition of “gotong royong” (cooperation), and the surrounding cultural environment as learning resources, Civics material becomes more meaningful and easier for students to internalize (Santoso et al., 2026).

An ethnographic approach to instruction enables teachers to act as "classroom ethnographers" by understanding students' cultural backgrounds and integrating them into the curriculum. Through educational ethnography, abstract concepts of citizenship are translated into cultural narratives, folklore, local wisdom, and the traditional community practice of “musyawarah” (deliberation) (Santoso et al., 2026). This approach has proven effective in fostering meaningful learning, as students perceive a direct connection between the citizenship theories studied in school and the socio-cultural realities of the environments in which they grow and develop (Fathonah & Heriyanto, 2025).

2.3 The Role of School Culture in Character Formation

The school environment plays a crucial ecological role in reinforcing the values learned in the classroom. A positive school culture characterized by practices such as exchanging greetings, engaging in communal religious activities, using consensus-based problem-solving, and upholding discipline humanely serves as a moral ecosystem that fosters student behavior aligned with the principles of Pancasila (Fathonah & Heriyanto, 2025).

Theoretically, school culture functions as a "hidden curriculum," often exerting a more powerful influence than the formal classroom curriculum (Setiawati et al., 2023).

Cognitive dissonance arises when the values of Pancasila taught in Civics (PPKn) classes are not reflected in the actual school environment (Köpeczi-Bócz, (2025). Therefore, cultivating a collective school culture characterized by transparent leadership, fair rule enforcement, and respect for diversity creates a moral ecosystem conducive to the sustained institutionalization of student character (Setiawati et al., 2023).

3. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using an ethnographic research design. The ethnographic approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of internalizing Pancasila values as they evolve within the school culture and the instructional practices of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) in an elementary school setting. The study seeks to uncover the meanings, habits, social interactions, and cultural values that emerge during learning activities, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of how Pancasila values are implemented in school life.

The research was conducted at an elementary school that integrates Pancasila values into its PPKn instruction and utilizes school culture as an integral part of the learning process. Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling—a method involving the deliberate choice of informants based on their possession of knowledge and experience relevant to the research focus. The informants included the school principal, PPKn or classroom teachers, students, and several parents serving as supporting informants. This diversity of informants was intended to yield comprehensive data regarding the internalization of Pancasila values, both within the school environment and in the students' daily lives.

Meanwhile, the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) also underscores the importance of character strengthening through contextual, student-centered learning and the development of the Pancasila Student Profile. This creates opportunities for Civics Education (PPKn) teachers to develop instructional models that leverage local cultural potential as a medium for internalizing values. However, studies regarding the application of the ethnographic approach in elementary school Civics instruction remain relatively limited, particularly those specifically examining the process of internalizing Pancasila values through students' cultural experiences.

Based on this context, research is needed on the topic: "Internalization of Pancasila Values Through an Ethnographic Approach in Elementary School Civics Instruction." This study aims to provide an overview of the process of internalizing Pancasila values through the utilization of local culture in Civics Education (PPKn) instruction, identify factors that facilitate or hinder its implementation, and generate recommendations for instruction that is more contextual, meaningful, and effective in shaping students' character in alignment with Pancasila values.

Data collection techniques employed included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was used to directly observe Civics Education (PPKn) learning activities, interactions between teachers and students, the enactment of school culture, habituation activities, and student behaviors reflecting the implementation of Pancasila values. The researcher acted as an observer with limited involvement in the school environment, allowing for a natural understanding of phenomena without disrupting the learning process.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with the school principal, teachers, students, and parents to gather information regarding teaching strategies, methods of internalizing Pancasila values, supporting and inhibiting factors, and the impact of the ethnographic approach on student character development. The interviews were conducted flexibly, enabling informants to share their experiences and perspectives in depth.

Document analysis was carried out to complement the data obtained from observations and interviews by examining various documents, such as the School Operational Curriculum (KOSP), teaching modules, Lesson Plans (RPP) or Kurikulum Merdeka teaching modules, school profiles, school regulations, habituation programs, activity photos, instructional videos, student work, teacher reflection journals, and other supporting documents related to the implementation of Pancasila values.

The research analysis focuses on: (1) the forms of internalizing Pancasila values within Civics Education (PPKn) instruction; (2) the implementation of an ethnographic approach utilizing local culture, school culture, and social interactions as learning resources; (3) the roles of teachers, students, schools, families, and the community in the process of internalizing Pancasila values; (4) the factors supporting and hindering the implementation of this internalization; and (5) the impact of the ethnographic approach on shaping student character in alignment with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study titled "Internalization of Pancasila Values Through an Ethnographic Approach in Civics Education (PPKn) at the Elementary School Level" aims to describe the process of internalizing Pancasila values within Civics Education (PPKn) instruction by employing an ethnographic approach. Research data were gathered through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the school principal, teachers, and students, as well as document analysis including teaching modules, instructional materials, school regulations, habituation programs, and documentation of school activities.

The findings reveal that the process of internalizing Pancasila values occurs not only through the delivery of instructional content but also through habituation, teacher role-modeling, school culture, and learning experiences derived from the social and cultural life of the surrounding community. The research results are presented below, organized according to the study's specific focus areas.

1) The Process of Internalizing Pancasila Values in Civics Education (PPKn) Instruction

Observation results indicate that the teacher has integrated Pancasila values into every stage of the Civics Education lesson from the introductory and core activities to the concluding activities. During the introductory stage, the teacher fosters habits such as praying together, singing the national anthem (Indonesia Raya), reciting the Pancasila principles, and providing an introduction (apperception) linked to daily life experiences. These activities serve to internalize values such as belief in God, nationalism, discipline, and responsibility.

In the core activities, the teacher employs methods such as group discussions, case studies, role-playing, environmental observation, and experiential reflection. Students are given the opportunity to identify the application of Pancasila values within their family, school, and community lives. The teacher goes beyond merely explaining concepts; they encourage students to analyze various social phenomena such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), classroom deliberation, interfaith tolerance, maintaining school cleanliness, and resolving conflicts among peers.

During the concluding activities, the teacher invites students to reflect on the values they have learned and consider how these values can be applied in their daily lives. Interviews revealed that Civics Education instruction is no longer solely focused on cognitive aspects; instead, it aims to shape positive student habits through consistent practice and real-world experiences. Observations also show that students are able to connect Civics Education material with experiences from their own environments, thereby making their understanding of Pancasila values

2) Implementation of the Ethnographic Approach in Civics Education (PPKn)

Research findings indicate that the ethnographic approach is implemented by utilizing local culture as a learning resource. Teachers encourage students to observe various cultural practices prevalent in the community, such as:

- a. mutual cooperation activities for environmental cleanup;
- b. the tradition of deliberation in decision-making;
- c. village communal work activities;
- d. the culture of showing respect to elders;
- e. kenduri or selamatan traditions (communal feasts/thanksgiving rituals);
- f. observances of national and religious holidays.

Students conduct simple observations of community life and subsequently discuss the connections between these cultural practices and the values of Pancasila. In some lessons, teachers invite community figures as resource persons to explain local cultural practices that reflect the values of mutual cooperation, unity, and tolerance. Additionally, students are required to produce reports on their observations regarding the culture of the communities in their respective neighborhoods. more meaningful.

3) School Culture Supporting the Internalization of Pancasila Values

Research findings indicate that school culture plays a significant role in the successful internalization of Pancasila values. The school practices observed include:

- a. a culture of greetings, smiles, and friendly interaction;
- b. communal prayer before and after lessons;
- c. classroom duty rosters;
- d. "Clean Friday" programs;
- e. morning literacy activities;
- f. flag-raising ceremonies;
- g. congregational prayers (in Islamic-based schools);
- h. habituation of queuing;
- i. charity/donation boxes;
- j. social service activities;

- k. class deliberations/discussions;
- l. recognition of student achievements.

Teachers set an example through discipline, courtesy, and responsibility, while also respecting every student regardless of their social background. These school practices foster a learning environment conducive to the development of values such as religiosity, mutual cooperation, responsibility, honesty, discipline, tolerance, and social concern.

4) Factors Supporting and Hindering the Internalization of Pancasila Values

Based on interview and observation results, supporting factors include:

- a. principal commitment;
- b. teacher competence in character education;
- c. a positive school culture;
- d. parental support;
- e. community involvement;
- f. availability of learning resources;
- g. a social environment that fosters a culture of mutual cooperation.

Meanwhile, hindering factors include:

- a. the influence of uneducational social media content;
- b. excessive use of digital devices;
- c. lack of involvement from some parents;
- d. limited instructional time;
- e. heterogeneity of student character;
- f. the influence of peer environments outside of school.

Teachers address these obstacles through intensive communication with parents, leading by example, fostering character-building habits, and strengthening extracurricular activities.

5) The Impact of Internalizing Pancasila Values on Students' Attitudes and Behavior

The research results indicate a change in student behavior following Civics Education (PPKn) lessons based on an ethnographic approach. Observed changes include:

- a. increased discipline;
- b. greater concern for peers;
- c. the growth of a culture of mutual cooperation;
- d. increased confidence in expressing opinions;
- e. improved ability to engage in deliberation and consensus-building;
- f. greater tolerance for differences;
- g. an increased sense of responsibility;
- h. a stronger sense of patriotism;
- i. reduced conflict among students;
- j. increased concern for the cleanliness of the school environment.

Teachers noted that students grasped Pancasila values more easily when learning through real-life experiences compared to merely reading textbooks. Students also demonstrated the ability to connect Pancasila values to their daily lives, making the learning process more meaningful.

The findings show that the ethnographic approach shapes student character more effectively than conventional instruction. This supports the theory of contextual learning (Johnson, 2002), which posits that learning becomes more meaningful when students connect the material to real-life experiences.

Furthermore, the results support the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) policy, which emphasizes character strengthening through the Pancasila Student Profile. Internalizing values through cultural experiences enables students not only to understand Pancasila concepts cognitively but also to implement them in their daily behavior. Thus, the ethnographic approach offers an alternative teaching strategy for Civics Education in primary schools, helping to cultivate students who are religious, democratic, tolerant, cooperative, critically minded, and responsible Indonesian citizens.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that internalizing Pancasila values through an ethnographic approach in Civics Education (PPKn) at the elementary school level is an effective strategy for instilling character values in students. The ethnographic approach enables students to learn and understand Pancasila values through the culture, traditions, customs, and social life of their surrounding communities, thereby making the learning process more contextual, meaningful, and closely aligned with the students' real-life experiences.

Implementing the ethnographic approach in Civics Education not only enhances students' cognitive understanding of Pancasila concepts but also fosters attitudes and behaviors that reflect the values of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice in daily life. Activities such as observing local culture, interviewing community figures, discussions, reflection, and presenting findings provide active learning experiences while strengthening cultural identity and a sense of patriotism.

Furthermore, the successful internalization of Pancasila values is influenced by the teacher's role as a learning facilitator; support from the school environment, family, and community; and the utilization of local culture as a learning resource. The synergy among these various parties creates an educational ecosystem that supports character development in line with the Pancasila Student Profile.

Thus, the ethnographic approach serves as an innovative alternative for Civics Education in elementary schools because it integrates Pancasila values with local wisdom. This allows students not only to understand Pancasila as a concept but also to internalize and implement its values in their daily lives as citizens of character, culture, and responsibility.

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