

## Developing a Pancasila-Based Project Learning Model for Social Studies: Bridging Character Education and Community Engagement

 <https://doi.org/xxxxxx>

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### Abstract

*This study addresses a persistent paradox in character education practices in Indonesia, where the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile through project-based approaches remains largely symbolic, fragmented, and disconnected from real-world social contexts. It aims to develop and validate a Pancasila-based project learning model for Social Studies that integrates character education with community engagement. Employing a qualitative design-based research framework, the study involves needs assessment, conceptual model development, pilot implementation, and iterative evaluation through triangulated data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the proposed model establishes an integrative pedagogical structure linking intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular learning with community-based project activities. It enhances the internalization of key Pancasila values, such as cooperation, empathy, tolerance, and cultural awareness, while fostering meaningful student participation in local communities. The study identifies critical enabling and constraining factors, including teacher facilitation capacity, institutional readiness, and student social dynamics. The novelty of this research lies in its systematic integration of character education, project-based learning, and community engagement into a replicable and adaptable model with clear operational stages. The model demonstrates strong potential to transform Social Studies into a contextual, participatory, and socially impactful learning process that supports sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** Character Education, Community Engagement, Project-Based Learning, Social Studies Education, Sustainable Development



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### Article Info:

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**Received manuscript:** 15/08/2025

**Final revision:** 08/09/2025

**Approved:** 19/10/2025

**Online Access:** 30/11/2025

**Published:** 30/11/2025

**How to cite:** Patmawati, S. A., Haumahu, S. S., & Patty, S. S. (2025). Developing a Pancasila-Based Project Learning Model for Social Studies: Bridging Character Education and Community Engagement. *Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (JPPM)*, 1(4), 343-366. <https://doi.org/xxxxxx>

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**Publisher:** PT. Sarana Mandiri Investama  
RT 07 RW 03 Desa Salamrejo Kec. Karangan, Kab. Trenggalek, Provinsi Jawa Timur, Indonesia

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## INTRODUCTION

The growing emphasis on character education within contemporary educational reform has positioned schools as strategic arenas for cultivating not only cognitive competencies but also ethical, social, and cultural dispositions. In Indonesia, this orientation is institutionally reinforced through the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile, which aspires to nurture learners who embody values such as cooperation, critical reasoning, global diversity, and moral integrity (Roestamy et al., 2022; Setyowati, 2021; Yani et al., 2022). Despite this policy commitment, a persistent paradox emerges at the level of practice. While curriculum frameworks explicitly mandate project-based approaches as vehicles for character

formation, empirical observations indicate that such initiatives often remain procedural and symbolic, lacking substantive engagement with real-life social contexts. In many classroom settings, particularly in Social Studies education, project-based learning is reduced to task completion rather than serving as a transformative pedagogical process that bridges knowledge, values, and lived experience (Sarifah et al., 2025; Setinawati et al., 2025). This disconnection is not merely pedagogical but structural, reflecting the absence of integrative models that can meaningfully align curriculum objectives, instructional strategies, and community realities.

The urgency of addressing this issue is underscored by mounting evidence that character education, when detached from authentic social engagement, tends to produce superficial outcomes. Studies have shown that students frequently perceive project-based activities as academic obligations rather than opportunities for social contribution or personal growth (Saud et al., 2025; Supadi et al., 2021; Susanti & Khu, 2025). In the Indonesian context, recent evaluations of the Pancasila Student Profile implementation reveal that many schools struggle to translate abstract values into concrete learning experiences, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent practices (Iskandar et al., 2025; Muthohirin, 2025). Furthermore, Social Studies as a discipline, which inherently deals with societal dynamics and civic responsibility, often remains confined to textbook-based instruction, thereby limiting its potential to foster critical and participatory citizenship (Libassi, 2024; Samson & Warganegara, 2021). This gap between intention and practice raises fundamental questions about how educational models can be designed to facilitate deeper internalization of values while simultaneously engaging students with the complexities of their social environment.

Scholarly discourse on character education has evolved significantly over the past decades, moving from normative frameworks toward more experiential and context-sensitive approaches. Early conceptualizations emphasized moral instruction and value transmission (Alam & Hamzah, 2025; Khumairoh et al., 2025), while more recent perspectives highlight the importance of situational learning, reflective practice, and social interaction in shaping character (Fauzi et al., 2025; Toumbourou et al., 2020). Within this trajectory, there is growing recognition that character is not merely taught but constructed through meaningful engagement with real-world challenges. This shift aligns with constructivist learning theories, which argue that knowledge and values are co-constructed through active participation and social negotiation (Purwandari et al., 2024; Sugita et al., 2021). However, the operationalization of these principles within formal schooling remains uneven, particularly in contexts where curriculum demands and assessment systems prioritize measurable academic outcomes over holistic development.

Parallel to developments in character education, project-based learning has gained prominence as an instructional strategy capable of fostering higher-order thinking skills, collaboration, and learner autonomy. Research consistently demonstrates that project-based learning can enhance student engagement and promote deeper understanding when implemented effectively (Habibi et al., 2025; Suntana et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2024). It allows

learners to investigate complex questions, apply interdisciplinary knowledge, and produce tangible outcomes that reflect their learning process. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of project-based learning is highly contingent upon its design and contextual relevance. Without clear alignment with learning objectives and meaningful contexts, projects risk becoming superficial activities that do not significantly impact students' cognitive or affective development (de Vries et al., 2025; Faddila et al., 2025). In many cases, the absence of structured reflection and value integration further limits the potential of project-based learning to contribute to character formation.

In recent years, the concept of community engagement and service-learning has emerged as a critical dimension in bridging education and societal needs. This approach emphasizes reciprocal relationships between educational institutions and communities, where students engage in activities that address real social issues while reflecting on their experiences to derive meaningful insights (El Hafiz et al., 2022; Gunawan et al., 2021; Trialfhianty et al., 2025). Empirical studies suggest that community-based learning can significantly enhance students' sense of social responsibility, empathy, and civic participation (Damanik & Ndonga, 2022; Dimiyati et al., 2021). Moreover, it provides a platform for integrating academic knowledge with practical application, thereby fostering a more holistic learning experience. Despite its potential, the integration of community engagement into formal curricula remains limited, often treated as an extracurricular or optional component rather than an integral part of the learning process.

Within the Indonesian educational landscape, efforts to incorporate community-based approaches are still in their nascent stages. While policy documents acknowledge the importance of contextual and experiential learning, there is a lack of concrete pedagogical models that systematically integrate these elements with existing curricular frameworks. Existing studies tend to focus either on evaluating the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile (Engchuan, 2020; Kharisma, 2021) or on examining the effectiveness of project-based learning in isolation (Achmadi et al., 2022; Yuda, 2020). Similarly, research on community engagement often operates within the domain of higher education, with limited attention to its application in secondary school contexts (Harmawati et al., 2024; Mustikawati et al., 2020; Ramdani & Lounela, 2020). As a result, there is a fragmented body of knowledge that does not fully capture the potential synergies between character education, project-based learning, and community engagement.

This fragmented landscape subtly reveals an underexplored space where these three dimensions could intersect in a more coherent and mutually reinforcing manner. The absence of integrative frameworks suggests that current approaches may be overlooking opportunities to create learning environments that are both pedagogically robust and socially relevant. In this regard, there is an implicit need to move beyond evaluative studies toward the development of models that not only conceptualize but also operationalize the integration of values, pedagogy, and community interaction within a single ecosystem of learning.

Responding to this need, the present study advances a conceptual and practical synthesis that brings together Pancasila-based character education, project-based learning, and community engagement into a unified model. What distinguishes this effort is not merely the combination of these elements, but the articulation of their interrelationships through a structured yet flexible framework that can be adapted across different educational contexts. By embedding value reflection mechanisms within project design and positioning community actors as active participants in the learning process, the model seeks to reconfigure Social Studies education as a transformative space where knowledge, character, and social action converge.

Accordingly, this study aims to develop and empirically examine a Pancasila-based project learning model for Social Studies that bridges character education and community engagement. It seeks to formulate the conceptual foundations of the model, assess its feasibility within secondary school settings, and evaluate its contribution to students' character development and social involvement. Through this endeavor, the study aspires to contribute to the broader discourse on how education can function as a catalyst for sustainable social transformation, particularly within developing and transitional societies.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach within a design-based research (DBR) framework to develop and refine a Pancasila-based project learning model for Social Studies. The choice of a qualitative design is grounded in the exploratory and interpretive nature of the research, which seeks to understand not only the effectiveness of a pedagogical model but also the processes, meanings, and contextual dynamics that shape its implementation. Qualitative inquiry allows for a nuanced examination of how values such as cooperation, empathy, and cultural awareness are internalized by students through authentic learning experiences. At the same time, the DBR approach is particularly suitable because it emphasizes iterative cycles of design, implementation, evaluation, and revision in real-world educational settings, thereby ensuring that the resulting model is both theoretically grounded and practically applicable (Deendarlianto et al., 2020; Mulya & Schäfer, 2023; Tampubolon et al., 2025).

The research was conducted in a public secondary school in Ambon, Indonesia, selected purposively due to its active engagement in implementing the Pancasila Student Profile and its openness to pedagogical innovation. This setting provides a relevant context for examining the integration of project-based learning and community engagement within Social Studies education, particularly in a socio-cultural environment that reflects the diversity and communal values embedded in Pancasila. The selection of this site is also informed by the need to situate the model within a real educational ecosystem where curriculum demands, teacher practices, and community interactions intersect.

The informants in this study consist of 15 participants, including 3 Social Studies teachers, 10 students from grade XI, and 2 school administrators. These participants were

selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the implementation of project-based learning activities and their capacity to provide rich, relevant insights. Teachers were chosen because of their role as facilitators of learning and key agents in translating curriculum into practice. Students were selected to capture diverse perspectives on learning experiences and value internalization, while school administrators were included to provide institutional perspectives on policy implementation and school readiness. This combination of informants allows for a holistic understanding of the model from multiple vantage points.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding the learning process and the integration of Pancasila values. This method was chosen because it enables the researcher to access subjective meanings and capture the complexity of human experiences (Tulus & Nerang, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2021). Participatory observation was employed during the implementation of project-based activities to document interactions, behaviors, and contextual factors that may not be fully articulated in interviews. This approach allows the researcher to immerse in the learning environment and gain firsthand insights into the dynamics of the classroom and community engagement processes. Document analysis was also conducted on lesson plans, student project reports, and reflective journals to triangulate findings and trace the alignment between planned and enacted curricula.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was applied through multiple strategies. Method triangulation was achieved by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. Source triangulation involved cross-checking information from different participants, including teachers, students, and administrators, to identify consistencies and discrepancies. Additionally, time triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different stages of the implementation process, allowing the researcher to capture changes and developments over time. Data analysis was performed thematically using an iterative process, where emerging patterns were continuously refined through constant comparison and reflection.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Reframing the Paradox: From Symbolic Implementation to Contextual Learning Practices**

The initial phase of this study reveals a persistent tension between the normative aspirations of the Pancasila Student Profile and its practical enactment in Social Studies classrooms. While curriculum documents emphasize project-based learning as a strategic pathway for character formation, empirical findings from observations and interviews suggest that its implementation remains largely symbolic and procedural. In many instances, project activities are designed to fulfill administrative requirements rather than to cultivate meaningful engagement with social realities. Students complete tasks such as poster-making, report writing, or presentations that are loosely framed around Pancasila values, yet these

activities often lack depth, continuity, and relevance to the lived experiences of the surrounding community. As one Social Studies teacher (R) reflected, “We follow the project guidelines, but sometimes it feels like students are just completing assignments, not really understanding or experiencing the values.” This statement encapsulates a broader pattern observed across the research site, where compliance with curricular mandates does not necessarily translate into substantive learning outcomes.

Classroom observations further reinforce this pattern. During several project sessions, students were seen working in groups to produce outputs that met formal criteria, such as visual appeal or completeness of content, but showed limited evidence of critical inquiry or social engagement. Discussions were often confined to textbook-based knowledge, and opportunities to connect project themes with local issues, such as environmental challenges or community practices, were rarely explored. In one observed session, for example, a group of students developed a project on “tolerance” by compiling definitions and examples from online sources, yet they did not engage with actual instances of diversity within their own neighborhood. When asked about this, a student (M) responded, “We just follow what is written in the module because we are not sure how to relate it to real situations.” This response highlights a key limitation in current practices: the absence of pedagogical scaffolding that enables students to bridge abstract values with concrete social contexts.

From an institutional perspective, school administrators also acknowledged this gap. An administrator (A) noted that while the school is committed to implementing the Pancasila Student Profile, there is still uncertainty about how to operationalize it effectively within subject-based learning. “We encourage teachers to design projects, but there is no clear model that shows how to integrate values, content, and community involvement in a structured way,” the administrator explained. This lack of a coherent pedagogical framework contributes to fragmented practices, where character education is treated as an add-on rather than an integral component of the learning process. Consequently, the potential of Social Studies as a discipline that inherently engages with societal issues remains underutilized.

These empirical findings point to what can be conceptualized as “performative compliance” in character education, where adherence to policy is demonstrated through visible activities without necessarily achieving the intended transformative impact. In this context, values such as cooperation, empathy, and tolerance are represented symbolically, through project themes or slogans, rather than being internalized through lived experience. This phenomenon is not unique to the Indonesian context; similar patterns have been identified in other educational settings where policy-driven reforms are implemented without sufficient attention to pedagogical depth and contextual relevance (Isra & Tegnan, 2021; Syahputra et al., 2023; Tun et al., 2025). However, in the case of the Pancasila Student Profile, the stakes are particularly significant, as the framework is intended to serve as a foundational guide for national character development.

The disjunction between curricular intent and classroom practice can be further understood through the lens of authentic learning environments. Lukito et al. (2025) and Regiamtama et al. (2025) argue that meaningful learning occurs when students engage with tasks that are situated in real-world contexts, involve complex problem-solving, and require collaboration with others beyond the classroom. Such environments enable learners to construct knowledge and values through direct experience, reflection, and social interaction. In contrast, the project-based activities observed in this study often lack these characteristics, resulting in what may be described as “inauthentic” learning experiences. Projects are completed within the confines of the classroom, disconnected from community realities, and evaluated primarily based on product rather than process.

This lack of authenticity has implications not only for student engagement but also for the depth of character formation. Without opportunities to encounter real social challenges, negotiate diverse perspectives, and reflect on their actions, students are unlikely to develop the dispositions associated with Pancasila values in a meaningful way. As one student (N) expressed, “We learn about helping others and respecting differences, but we rarely do it outside the classroom.” This statement underscores the need to move beyond representational approaches toward more experiential and contextually grounded forms of learning.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the current implementation of project-based learning within the Pancasila framework remains constrained by proceduralism and limited contextual integration. The emphasis on completing projects as curricular artifacts overshadows the deeper objective of fostering character through engagement with real-world issues. This condition calls for a reconceptualization of how project-based learning is designed and enacted, particularly in Social Studies education. Rather than treating projects as isolated tasks, there is a need to embed them within a broader pedagogical ecosystem that connects classroom learning with community practices, encourages critical reflection, and supports the gradual internalization of values.

In this sense, the paradox identified at the outset of the study is not merely a gap between policy and practice, but a reflection of deeper structural and pedagogical challenges. Addressing this paradox requires more than incremental adjustments; it calls for a reorientation toward learning models that prioritize authenticity, integration, and social relevance. By foregrounding these dimensions, the study sets the stage for the development of a more coherent and transformative approach to character education, one that aligns the ideals of the Pancasila Student Profile with the realities of classroom practice and community life.

### **Constructing the Pancasila-Based Project Learning Model: Integrating Values, Pedagogy, and Community**

The construction of the Pancasila-based project learning model in this study emerged through an iterative and reflective process characteristic of design-based research, where empirical insights and theoretical considerations continuously informed one another. The

initial stage of needs analysis, derived from interviews, classroom observations, and document reviews, revealed a fragmented pedagogical landscape in which values, instructional strategies, and community realities were treated as separate domains rather than as an interconnected whole. Teachers tended to approach Pancasila values as thematic labels attached to projects, while project-based learning itself was implemented as a method focused on task completion. Community engagement, when present, appeared incidental rather than intentionally designed. These findings became the starting point for rethinking how a more coherent and integrative model could be constructed.

The development process began by identifying the core elements that needed to be brought into alignment: the normative dimension of Pancasila values, the pedagogical structure of project-based learning, and the contextual dimension of community engagement. Rather than positioning these as parallel components, the model conceptualizes them as mutually constitutive elements within a single learning ecosystem. This orientation was informed by the notion of integrative learning ecosystems, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of learning across formal, non-formal, and informal contexts (Ervina & Sadek, 2025; Suharno et al., 2025; Yip et al., 2025). In this perspective, learning is not confined to the classroom but extends into the social and cultural environments in which students are embedded. Consequently, the model was designed to facilitate continuous interaction between school-based activities and community-based experiences.

At the conceptual level, the model is structured around three interrelated domains: intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular learning. The intracurricular domain refers to formal classroom instruction in Social Studies, where foundational knowledge and conceptual understanding are developed. Within this domain, Pancasila values are not introduced as abstract principles but are embedded within thematic inquiries that reflect real social issues. For example, topics such as social inequality, cultural diversity, or environmental sustainability are framed in ways that invite students to explore their relevance within their local context. A teacher (S) noted during the design phase, "We realized that values become more meaningful when they are connected to issues students can see and experience around them." This insight guided the integration of value-based inquiry into the core curriculum.

The cocurricular domain functions as a bridge between classroom learning and community engagement. It encompasses structured project activities that extend beyond the boundaries of conventional lessons but remain aligned with curricular objectives. In this domain, students work collaboratively to design and implement projects that address identified social issues. The design process is guided by a set of stages that include problem identification, project planning, implementation, and reflection. Importantly, each stage incorporates explicit mechanisms for value reflection, encouraging students to critically examine how their actions relate to Pancasila principles. Observational data from pilot implementation indicate that these reflective moments play a crucial role in deepening students' understanding. One student (L) reflected, "When we discussed what cooperation really means in our project, I started to see it not just as a concept, but as something we

practice when working with others.”

The extracurricular domain extends the learning process into broader community contexts, where students engage directly with local actors and social realities. This dimension is particularly important in operationalizing community engagement as an integral component of the model. Rather than treating community involvement as an optional or supplementary activity, the model positions it as a core element of the learning process. Students collaborate with community members, local organizations, or informal groups to implement their projects, thereby experiencing firsthand the complexities and challenges of social interaction. An administrator (A) emphasized the significance of this approach, stating, “When students go outside the school and interact with the community, they begin to understand the real meaning of values like empathy and tolerance.” This experiential dimension reinforces the idea that character formation is inseparable from social practice.

The integration of these three domains is not linear but cyclical and dynamic. Learning flows between classroom instruction, project-based activities, and community engagement, with each domain informing and enriching the others. For instance, insights gained from community interactions are brought back into the classroom for further analysis and discussion, while theoretical concepts explored in class inform the design and implementation of projects. This cyclical process aligns with contemporary understandings of learning as an iterative and socially situated phenomenon (Alkadri et al., 2025; Toha et al., 2021; Toyibah & Riyani, 2025). It also reflects the principles of design-based research, where ongoing refinement is guided by continuous feedback from practice.

A key feature of the model is the incorporation of structured reflection as a central mechanism for integrating values, knowledge, and experience. Reflection is facilitated through guided discussions, reflective journals, and group debriefings, allowing students to articulate their learning and examine the ethical dimensions of their actions. This emphasis on reflection is critical in moving beyond surface-level engagement toward deeper internalization of values. As one teacher (R) observed after implementing the model, “The reflection sessions helped students connect what they did in the community with what they learned in class. It made the learning more meaningful.”

The development of this model also highlights the importance of teacher agency and professional judgment. Teachers are not merely implementers of a predefined framework but active co-designers who adapt the model to their specific context. Throughout the research process, teachers contributed to refining the model by providing feedback on its feasibility and relevance. This collaborative approach ensures that the model remains grounded in practice while retaining its conceptual coherence. At the same time, it underscores the need for institutional support in terms of time, resources, and professional development to sustain such innovations.

### **Operationalizing the Model: Stages of Project Design, Value Reflection, and Community Engagement**

The operationalization of the Pancasila-based project learning model in this study unfolds through a series of interconnected stages that translate conceptual design into situated classroom and community practices. Consistent with the design-based research approach, these stages were not implemented as rigid procedures but as adaptive processes refined through ongoing observation, feedback, and reflection. The implementation began with the identification of local social issues, a phase that proved crucial in anchoring learning within students' lived realities. Rather than relying solely on predefined topics, teachers facilitated exploratory discussions that encouraged students to observe and question their immediate social environment. Through guided inquiry, students identified issues such as waste management, intergroup relations, and cultural practices within their neighborhoods. One student (F) noted, "When we started discussing problems around us, I realized that many things we learn in class actually exist in our daily life." This stage reflects an intentional shift from abstract learning toward contextual relevance, aligning with the principle that meaningful education begins with learners' experiences.

Following this exploratory phase, students engaged in the design of their projects, working collaboratively to formulate objectives, strategies, and expected outcomes. Teachers acted as facilitators, providing scaffolding while allowing students to exercise agency in decision-making. The design process emphasized not only the technical aspects of project planning but also the explicit integration of Pancasila values. For instance, groups were encouraged to articulate how their proposed activities would reflect principles such as cooperation, empathy, or respect for diversity. Analysis of project planning documents shows that this requirement prompted students to move beyond generic value statements toward more deliberate considerations of how values could be enacted. A teacher (R) reflected, "Before, students would just mention values in their reports. Now they have to think about how those values guide their actions." This shift indicates the emergence of a more reflective and intentional approach to value integration.

The implementation stage involved the execution of projects in both school and community settings. Students worked in groups to carry out activities such as organizing community clean-up initiatives, conducting interviews with local residents, or facilitating small-scale social campaigns. Observational data reveal that these activities fostered collaboration and problem-solving, but also exposed students to the complexities of real-world interaction. In several instances, students had to negotiate differing perspectives, adapt to unforeseen challenges, and engage with individuals outside their usual social circles. These experiences created opportunities for what can be described as "disorienting dilemmas," moments that challenge existing assumptions and prompt deeper reflection. Such moments are central to transformative learning processes, where individuals reconstruct their understanding through critical reflection on experience (Aditia & Széll, 2025; Alatas & Slama, 2022; Duncan-Horner et al., 2022).

A defining feature of the model is the structured incorporation of value reflection throughout the project cycle. Reflection was not treated as a concluding activity but as an ongoing process embedded at multiple stages. Teachers facilitated reflective discussions at key points, prompting students to consider questions such as how their actions aligned with Pancasila values, what challenges they encountered, and how their perspectives evolved. In addition, students maintained reflective journals that documented their thoughts and experiences. Analysis of these journals indicates a gradual deepening of reflection, moving from descriptive accounts toward more critical and introspective insights. One student (N) wrote, "At first, I thought cooperation just meant working together, but when we faced problems in the community, I realized it also means listening and understanding others." This statement illustrates how reflection functions as a bridge between activity and internalization, enabling students to translate experience into personal meaning.

The involvement of community actors constitutes another integral dimension of the model's operationalization. Rather than positioning the community as a passive context, the model encourages active collaboration with local stakeholders. Students engaged with community members, local leaders, and informal groups, seeking input, feedback, and participation in their projects. This interaction not only enriched the learning process but also contributed to a sense of social responsibility. An administrator (A) observed, "When students interact directly with the community, they begin to see themselves as part of something larger." Such engagement fosters a relational understanding of learning, where knowledge and values are co-constructed through social interaction. It also reinforces the idea that education can serve as a bridge between school and society, rather than remaining confined within institutional boundaries.

Throughout the implementation process, data from observations and document analysis highlight the dynamic interplay between structure and flexibility. While the model provides a clear framework of stages, its effectiveness depends on the ability of teachers and students to adapt it to their specific context. In some cases, projects evolved in unexpected directions as new insights emerged or challenges arose. This adaptability reflects the iterative nature of design-based research, where refinement is guided by practice rather than predetermined outcomes (Alkatiri & Kiwang, 2023; Regus, 2022). At the same time, the presence of structured elements, particularly the emphasis on reflection and value integration, ensures that the process remains aligned with its educational objectives.

The operationalization of the model thus illustrates how project-based learning can be reconfigured to support deeper character formation when it is grounded in authentic contexts and supported by reflective practice. By linking the stages of issue identification, project design, collaborative implementation, and community engagement through continuous reflection, the model creates a coherent learning trajectory that moves beyond procedural activity toward transformative experience. This trajectory resonates with contemporary perspectives on learning as a process of meaning-making that is both socially situated and critically reflective. In this sense, the model does not merely add community

engagement to existing practices but redefines the very nature of learning as an integrated, participatory, and value-driven process.

### **Transformative Outcomes: Internalization of Pancasila Values and Student Social Engagement**

The implementation of the Pancasila-based project learning model demonstrates a set of transformative outcomes that extend beyond procedural learning toward deeper character formation and meaningful social engagement. Drawing on triangulated data from interviews, participatory observations, and student reflective documents, the findings indicate that students experienced a gradual yet significant shift in how they understood and enacted core Pancasila values such as cooperation, empathy, tolerance, and cultural awareness. These values, which were previously encountered as abstract concepts within textbooks or thematic instructions, became embedded within students' lived experiences through direct interaction with peers and community members. This transformation did not occur instantaneously but evolved through iterative cycles of action and reflection, consistent with the design-based nature of the intervention.

One of the most evident outcomes relates to the internalization of gotong royong, or collaborative solidarity, which emerged as both a practical necessity and a reflective insight during project implementation. Observations of group work revealed that students initially approached collaboration as task division rather than shared responsibility. However, as projects unfolded, particularly those requiring engagement with community stakeholders, students began to recognize the importance of coordination, mutual support, and collective decision-making. A student (L) reflected, "At first, we just split the tasks so we could finish quickly, but when we worked with the community, we had to really cooperate because everyone depended on each other." This shift illustrates how experiential contexts can reframe the meaning of cooperation from a procedural strategy into a value-laden practice. Teachers also noted this change, with one teacher (R) observing that "students became more aware that working together is not just about completing tasks, but about respecting each other's roles and contributions."

Empathy emerged as another critical dimension of transformation, particularly through students' direct engagement with community issues. Projects that involved interaction with local residents, such as conducting interviews or organizing social initiatives, exposed students to diverse perspectives and lived realities. These encounters often challenged preconceived notions and prompted emotional as well as cognitive responses. For example, a student (N) described her experience of interviewing community members about environmental concerns: "When I heard their stories, I realized that the problems are more complicated than I thought. It made me think about how our actions affect others." Such reflections indicate a movement toward perspective-taking and emotional understanding, key components of empathetic development. This aligns with findings in experiential learning research, which emphasize that direct engagement with real-world contexts enhances students' ability to relate to others and develop moral sensitivity (Nakissa, 2020; Sarmini et

al., 2024; Suyadi et al., 2022).

Tolerance and respect for diversity were also strengthened through the collaborative and community-based nature of the projects. Within group interactions, students encountered differences in opinions, working styles, and cultural backgrounds, which required negotiation and mutual adjustment. These micro-level interactions were further extended through engagement with the broader community, where students interacted with individuals from varied social and cultural contexts. An administrator (A) noted that “students who were previously hesitant to interact with people outside their circle became more open and respectful after participating in community activities.” Although such changes may appear subtle, they represent important shifts in social disposition that are difficult to achieve through conventional classroom instruction alone. The experiential dimension of the model thus provides a space for students to practice tolerance in real situations rather than merely discussing it as an abstract ideal.

Cultural awareness, particularly in relation to local traditions and practices, also became more pronounced as students engaged with community contexts. Projects that involved exploring local cultural practices or addressing community-specific issues encouraged students to reflect on their own identities and the cultural resources within their environment. A student (F) noted, “Before this project, I did not pay much attention to local traditions, but now I see them as important parts of our identity.” This heightened awareness reflects a form of contextual learning where students connect academic content with cultural realities, thereby reinforcing the relevance of Social Studies as a discipline.

Beyond individual value internalization, the model also fostered active student participation in community life, indicating a broader dimension of civic engagement. Students were not merely observers but active contributors, designing and implementing projects that addressed real needs. Observational data show that students took initiative in organizing activities, communicating with community members, and adapting their strategies based on feedback. This active involvement contributed to a sense of agency and responsibility, as students began to see themselves as capable of contributing to social change. A teacher (S) remarked, “Students started to feel that what they do in school can have an impact outside, and that motivated them to take their projects more seriously.” This sense of agency is a key aspect of civic development, as it connects knowledge and values with action.

The comparative dimension of these findings becomes particularly evident when contrasted with conventional approaches to character education. In traditional settings, values are often transmitted through lectures, moral instruction, or symbolic activities that do not require sustained engagement. While such approaches may raise awareness, they rarely lead to deep internalization or behavioral change. In contrast, the model implemented in this study situates learning within authentic contexts, where students must navigate real challenges, interact with others, and reflect on their experiences. This alignment between experience and reflection is central to experiential and service-learning theories, which argue that meaningful learning occurs when individuals actively engage with their environment and

critically examine their actions (Abdurrahim et al., 2023; Habibullah, 2024).

The transformative outcomes observed in this study thus highlight the potential of integrating project-based learning with community engagement as a pathway for character education. The process of engaging with real-world issues, collaborating with others, and reflecting on experiences creates a learning environment where values are not only understood but lived. At the same time, the findings suggest that such transformation is contingent upon the presence of structured reflection and supportive facilitation, which help students make sense of their experiences and connect them to broader ethical frameworks. In this regard, the model demonstrates how Social Studies education can be reoriented toward a more participatory and socially grounded form of learning, where character development is inseparable from engagement with the world.

### **Enabling and Constraining Factors in Model Implementation**

The implementation of the Pancasila-based project learning model reveals that its effectiveness is shaped not only by the robustness of its design but also by a constellation of enabling and constraining factors embedded within the school ecosystem. Drawing from interviews, observations, and document analysis, the findings suggest that successful enactment of the model depends heavily on the interplay between teacher agency, institutional conditions, and student dynamics. These factors do not operate in isolation; rather, they interact in ways that either reinforce or undermine the transformative potential of the model.

Among the enabling factors, the role of teachers as active facilitators emerges as particularly significant. Teachers who demonstrated a strong sense of pedagogical agency were more capable of translating the model into meaningful classroom practices. Rather than adhering rigidly to procedural guidelines, these teachers adapted the model to their specific context, guided students through reflective processes, and created spaces for dialogue and inquiry. One teacher (R) explained, “The model gives a structure, but we still need to interpret it based on our students’ needs. When we guide them to reflect, that is where the real learning happens.” This perspective underscores the importance of teacher agency as a form of professional judgment that mediates between policy and practice. In line with Hadiyanto et al. (2025) and Rosidi et al. (2021), teacher agency can be understood as an emergent capacity shaped by individual beliefs, professional knowledge, and contextual affordances. In this study, teachers who perceived themselves as co-designers rather than implementers were more likely to foster authentic and reflective learning experiences.

A supportive school culture also plays a critical enabling role. The research site demonstrated a degree of openness to innovation, which allowed for experimentation and iterative refinement of the model. School leadership provided flexibility in scheduling and encouraged collaboration among teachers, creating an environment conducive to pedagogical change. An administrator (A) noted, “We try to give teachers space to try new approaches, even if it means adjusting the usual routines.” This institutional support enabled teachers to integrate project-based and community-oriented activities without being

constrained by rigid administrative expectations. Moreover, a collaborative culture among teachers facilitated the sharing of ideas and practices, further strengthening the implementation process.

Community support constitutes another important enabling factor. The willingness of local actors to engage with students provided the necessary context for authentic learning experiences. Community members participated in project activities, offered insights, and, in some cases, co-constructed solutions with students. This reciprocal relationship enhanced the relevance and impact of the projects while reinforcing students' sense of social responsibility. A student (F) reflected, "When the community responded positively to our project, it made us feel that what we were doing really mattered." Such experiences highlight the importance of external partnerships in extending learning beyond the classroom and grounding it in real-world contexts.

Despite these enabling conditions, the study also identifies several constraints that complicate the implementation of the model. One of the most prominent challenges relates to time limitations within the formal school schedule. Project-based and community-engaged learning require extended periods for planning, execution, and reflection, which often exceed the time allocated for conventional lessons. Teachers expressed difficulty in balancing curricular demands with the depth of engagement required by the model. A teacher (S) remarked, "We want to do the projects thoroughly, but sometimes we have to rush because of the curriculum targets." This tension reflects a broader structural issue, where existing timetables and assessment systems are not fully aligned with the principles of experiential and integrative learning.

Institutional readiness also emerges as a critical constraint. While the school in this study showed a degree of openness, not all aspects of the institutional framework were fully prepared to support the model. Limitations in resources, lack of formal guidelines, and varying levels of teacher preparedness created inconsistencies in implementation. Some teachers reported uncertainty in facilitating reflective discussions or engaging with community partners, indicating a need for sustained professional development. This finding resonates with the notion that educational innovation requires not only individual initiative but also systemic support structures that enable consistent and scalable practices (Buaban, 2020; Puspitasari et al., 2021).

Student social dynamics further influence the implementation process in complex ways. While many students responded positively to collaborative and community-based activities, differences in motivation, confidence, and interpersonal skills affected group interactions. In some cases, dominant individuals took control of projects, while others remained passive, limiting the potential for equitable participation. Observations also revealed that students who were less accustomed to open-ended tasks initially struggled with the autonomy required by the model. However, these challenges gradually diminished as students became more familiar with the learning approach. A student (N) reflected, "At first, it was confusing because we were not used to this kind of learning, but over time we learned

how to work together better.” This suggests that while student dynamics can pose initial barriers, they also represent opportunities for growth when supported by appropriate facilitation.

Taken together, these findings highlight that the implementation of the model is a situated process shaped by multiple interacting factors. The presence of enabling conditions such as teacher agency, supportive school culture, and community engagement can significantly enhance the model’s effectiveness. At the same time, constraints related to time, institutional readiness, and student dynamics underscore the need for careful adaptation and ongoing support. Importantly, these factors should not be viewed as fixed limitations but as elements that can be addressed through strategic interventions, such as professional development, policy alignment, and the strengthening of school-community partnerships.

This analysis reinforces the argument that educational innovation cannot be reduced to the introduction of new models or frameworks alone. Rather, it requires attention to the broader ecosystem in which learning takes place. The success of the Pancasila-based project learning model thus depends on the extent to which schools are able to cultivate conditions that support teacher agency, foster collaboration, and connect learning with community realities. In this sense, the model serves not only as a pedagogical innovation but also as a lens through which the complexities of educational change can be understood.

### **Toward a Replicable and Adaptive Learning Model: Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The development and implementation of the Pancasila-based project learning model in this study not only address immediate pedagogical challenges but also offer broader theoretical and practical implications for the advancement of Social Studies education and character education more generally. One of the central contributions of this model lies in its potential to be replicated and adapted across diverse educational contexts without losing its conceptual integrity. This adaptability is rooted in the model’s flexible yet structured design, which emphasizes principles rather than rigid procedures. By organizing learning around the integration of values, project-based inquiry, and community engagement, the model provides a framework that can be contextualized according to local needs, cultural settings, and institutional capacities. As one teacher (R) reflected after the pilot implementation, “The structure helps us stay focused, but we can still adjust the activities depending on our students and environment.” This balance between coherence and flexibility is essential for ensuring that the model remains relevant beyond the initial research site.

From a theoretical standpoint, the model contributes to the growing discourse on contextualized global pedagogy, which seeks to bridge globally recognized educational approaches with locally grounded values and practices. In this case, Pancasila serves not merely as a normative foundation but as an active lens through which global pedagogical strategies such as project-based learning and community engagement are interpreted and enacted. Rather than adopting these approaches in a generic or decontextualized manner, the model situates them within the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian society. This alignment reflects Sukabdi (2021) and Vlasses et al. (2020) argument that effective

educational innovation must be rooted in local contexts while remaining open to global perspectives. By embedding Pancasila values within the structure of experiential and collaborative learning, the model demonstrates how local philosophical frameworks can enrich and transform widely used pedagogical models.

The implications for Social Studies education are particularly significant. Traditionally, Social Studies has been positioned as a subject concerned with knowledge transmission about society, often relying on textbooks and classroom-based discussions. The model developed in this study reconfigures this orientation by positioning Social Studies as a site of active engagement with social realities. Learning is no longer limited to understanding societal concepts but extends to participating in and contributing to the community. Observational data indicate that students began to perceive Social Studies not only as an academic subject but as a meaningful space for social action. A student (F) noted, "Now I feel that what we learn in Social Studies is directly connected to what happens around us." This shift suggests that the model has the potential to revitalize the subject by making it more relevant, participatory, and impactful.

In terms of character education, the model offers an alternative to approaches that rely heavily on moral instruction or symbolic activities. By integrating value reflection into every stage of the learning process, the model ensures that character formation is not treated as a separate domain but as an integral part of academic and social engagement. This integration is particularly important in addressing the limitations of conventional practices, where values are often declared but not experienced. The findings of this study suggest that when students engage with real-world issues and reflect on their experiences, values such as empathy, cooperation, and tolerance become internalized in more meaningful ways. This aligns with contemporary perspectives on character education that emphasize experiential and relational learning as key drivers of moral development (Hadiyantina, 2021; Mahaswa & Syaja, 2025; Paluttri, 2024).

Practically, the model also highlights the importance of building sustainable partnerships between schools and communities. The involvement of community actors not only enhances the authenticity of learning experiences but also creates opportunities for mutual benefit. Students gain exposure to real-life challenges, while communities benefit from the ideas and initiatives generated through student projects. An administrator (A) observed, "The projects have started to create a connection between the school and the community that did not exist before." This reciprocal relationship suggests that the model can contribute to broader social development by positioning schools as active participants in community life. However, sustaining such partnerships requires ongoing commitment, clear communication, and institutional support, indicating that scalability must be accompanied by systemic planning.

The replicability of the model also depends on the readiness of educational stakeholders to embrace its underlying principles. As identified in earlier findings, teacher agency and institutional support are critical factors in successful implementation. Therefore,

efforts to adapt the model in other contexts should be accompanied by professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills and confidence to facilitate reflective and community-based learning. Additionally, policy frameworks need to provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate the time and resources required for such approaches. Without these enabling conditions, there is a risk that the model may be reduced to another procedural requirement, thereby reproducing the very limitations it seeks to overcome.

At a broader level, the model contributes to ongoing conversations about the role of education in supporting sustainable social development. By connecting classroom learning with community engagement, the model aligns with the idea that education should not only prepare individuals for the future but also empower them to participate in shaping their present. This orientation is particularly relevant in developing and transitional societies, where educational systems are often called upon to address complex social challenges. The integration of local values with global pedagogical approaches provides a pathway for creating learning environments that are both culturally grounded and forward-looking.

### CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development and implementation of a Pancasila-based project learning model for Social Studies provides a viable pedagogical response to the longstanding gap between normative character education goals and their fragmented realization in classroom practice. By systematically integrating Pancasila values, project-based learning, and community engagement within a coherent and iterative design framework, the model moves beyond symbolic enactment toward a more contextual and experiential form of learning. The findings indicate that such integration enables a deeper internalization of core values, particularly cooperation, empathy, tolerance, and cultural awareness, while simultaneously positioning students as active participants in their social environment. At the same time, the study affirms that the effectiveness of this model is contingent upon enabling conditions such as teacher agency, institutional support, and community collaboration, alongside the need to navigate practical constraints within school systems. In this regard, the study not only achieves its objective of formulating and validating an implementable model, but also offers a conceptual contribution by demonstrating how locally grounded values can be meaningfully aligned with global pedagogical approaches in a way that is adaptable across contexts. Without overstating its scope, the model indicates a clear direction for reorienting Social Studies toward a more participatory and socially responsive learning process that holds relevance for broader efforts in character education and community-based educational development.

### ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their

safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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