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Transformative Political Education through Pancasila Values in an Islamic Elementary School

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ABSTRACT. This qualitative case study examines how Pancasila values are translated into opportunities for democratic learning at SD Islam Al Azhar 3 Cirebon. The study draws on observations, interviews, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students. The reported practices include classroom deliberation, collaborative tasks, class agreements, shared responsibilities, and the integration of Islamic moral language with national civic values. These practices suggest three interconnected processes: making civic principles understandable, recognizing others as legitimate participants, and providing repeated opportunities for collective action. Teachers mediate these processes through their communication and allocation of classroom authority. However, opportunities to speak should not be equated automatically with influence over decisions, and routine cooperation does not establish sustained democratic transformation. The case therefore supports an interpretation of the school as a setting for emerging democratic dispositions rather than demonstrating a causal or long-term change in character. The study contributes a context-sensitive account of how religious ethics, Pancasila, and participatory pedagogy may interact in Islamic elementary education. Its implications concern inclusive participation, explicit feedback on students' proposals, reflective teacher development, and alignment between classroom practice and school governance.

Keywords: *Political Education; Pancasila; Democratic Character; Student Participation; Islamic Elementary Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Democratic education concerns how learners encounter rights, disagreement, responsibility, and collective decisions in their everyday relationships. Its meaning cannot be reduced to memorizing institutions or complying with classroom rules. A theoretical review identifies multiple democratic traditions, including deliberative, participatory, multicultural, and critical approaches, whose educational priorities overlap but are not identical (Sant, 2019). Research on civic education likewise indicates that what schools teach and how students experience participation must be considered together (Campbell, 2019; Jerome et al., 2024). For elementary education, the relevant question is how children are enabled to contribute to shared life in developmentally appropriate ways.

Pancasila provides an Indonesian ethical and civic framework through which these experiences can be interpreted. Its principles connect religious life with human dignity, national solidarity, deliberation, and social justice. Yet knowing the wording of the principles is different from using them to justify a fair decision or respond to a peer's objection. Indonesian research

identifies the importance of age-sensitive Pancasila competencies and of learning designs that connect civic values with local social experience (Ruyadi & Dahliyana, 2022; Sumardjoko & Musyiam, 2018). The educational challenge is therefore to translate normative commitments into observable relationships and practices without treating conformity as sufficient evidence of democratic character.

The term transformative requires similar precision. Perspective-transformation scholarship highlights changes in how people understand themselves and their relationships, while emphasizing continuity, intersubjectivity, and praxis (Hoggan et al., 2017). Because that literature principally concerns adult learning, its application to elementary pupils requires caution. Here, transformative political education is used as an interpretive orientation: the movement from repeating civic principles toward recognizing others' perspectives and taking responsibility for shared decisions. It is not assumed that a classroom activity, by itself, demonstrates a durable transformation in a child's worldview.

Children's participation is central to this distinction. A review of rights perceptions shows that pupils' understandings of rights emerge through their school relationships and experiences, not only through explicit legal instruction (Perry-Hazan, 2021). Research specifically addressing primary schools also identifies tensions between children having opportunities to speak and selected pupils being authorized to speak for others (Mayes et al., 2019). Consequently, participation must be examined in terms of access, representation, adult responsiveness, and the consequences of students' contributions (Holquist et al., 2023). These dimensions offer stronger analytical criteria than simply counting how often students answer questions.

Islamic elementary education provides a distinctive setting for investigating these processes. Religious commitments and Pancasila may provide complementary ethical resources, but their compatibility must be enacted through teaching rather than presumed from their stated ideals. Research in pesantren-based secondary schools identifies both institutional strategies for integrating these values and teachers' difficulties in achieving that integration (Murdiono et al., 2017). Elementary-level research on character education through traditional games offers a related example of linking concrete experiences with reflective questioning (Hafina et al., 2022). These findings invite examination of how moral language becomes a resource for reciprocal respect rather than only adult-directed discipline.

Teachers and school structures shape the opportunities available to children. Studies connect teachers' civic beliefs with instructional choices and show that democratic education can be constrained by inadequate preparation and unclear policy responsibilities (Knowles, 2018; Sant et al., 2024). School culture matters as well: participation may differ across classroom activities, co-curricular structures, and informal relationships (Graham et al., 2018). A school may encourage discussion during lessons while retaining adult control over decisions that students consider important. Examining these tensions makes it possible to distinguish democratic aspirations from their institutional enactment.

The primary school years deserve attention in their own right. Evidence from England shows that active civic learning opportunities are unevenly distributed even in primary education (Body et al., 2024). This does not establish the same pattern in Indonesia, but it cautions against assuming that every child benefits equally from nominally participatory arrangements. An Islamic elementary case can illuminate how opportunities are organized locally, while remaining attentive to differences in confidence, communication, social position, and access to adult attention.

This study investigates SD Islam Al Azhar 3 Cirebon through three questions: How are Pancasila values translated into classroom and school practices? How do teachers mediate children's participation and connect Islamic ethics with civic values? What do these practices indicate about democratic character, and what remains unestablished? The study's contribution is a situated interpretation of the relationships among values, pedagogy, and participation. The

institution is described consistently as an Islamic elementary school; its findings are not presented as evidence about all Madrasah Ibtidaiyah institutions.

METHOD

The study employed a qualitative case study design to examine educational practices within SD Islam Al Azhar 3 Cirebon. The bounded focus was the relationship between Pancasila values, classroom interactions, school routines, and democratic character. An interpretive orientation was appropriate because deliberation, responsibility, and respect acquire meaning through participants' accounts and their institutional context. The analysis addresses how the reported practices operate and how participants understand them; it does not estimate an intervention effect or compare the school statistically with other institutions.

Data were obtained through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students. The interview excerpts reproduced in the findings are dated 15, 18, and 20 May 2025. Observations concerned classroom discussion, collaborative learning, task allocation, and routine activities. Interviews explored educators' understandings of political education, their pedagogical intentions, and the relationship between national and religious values. Documentation provided an additional source for considering the relationship between institutional expectations and reported practice. The original Indonesian wording of the quoted interviews is retained.

The reported analytical process consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings are organized around participation, teacher mediation, school culture, and religious civic integration. This organization distinguishes descriptive evidence from the subsequent theoretical interpretation. Methodological scholarship emphasizes the importance of making analytical decisions traceable and avoiding the presentation of themes as if they simply appeared without interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). These principles clarify the interpretive character of the analysis and the need to connect each theme with its supporting evidence.

Source and technique triangulation were used to compare interviews, observations, and school documentation. Agreement across these sources was interpreted as contextual support, rather than as proof of causal transformation. Quality criteria must remain consistent with the actual analytical approach; reflexive thematic analysis, coding-reliability procedures, and other approaches should not be treated as interchangeable labels (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Accordingly, no intercoder-reliability statistic or unreported member-checking procedure is claimed.

The available account does not specify participant numbers, grade levels, sampling and recruitment procedures, observation duration, the documentary corpus, researcher positionality, or the consent and ethical-review arrangements. These reporting gaps limit the assessment of credibility and transferability and require completion from the researchers' records. Saturation cannot be established merely from recurring themes: identifying topic coverage differs from achieving a sufficiently rich understanding of meaning (Hennink et al., 2017). Sample adequacy also needs justification in relation to the research question, design, and depth of data (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The reported findings are therefore interpreted as context-bound evidence of pedagogical practices, with no claim that sampling sufficiency or long-term outcomes has been demonstrated.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Classroom deliberation and shared responsibility

The reported observations indicate that teachers encouraged students to express opinions, listen to classmates, discuss group tasks, and make collective decisions. Students divided

responsibilities and presented ideas during collaborative learning. These activities made civic principles visible in the organization of classroom interaction: deliberation involved exchanging reasons, while responsibility involved carrying out an agreed task. A teacher described the intention behind this approach:

> *"Anak-anak tidak hanya diarahkan untuk memahami nilai Pancasila secara teori, tetapi mereka harus mengalami langsung bagaimana cara bermusyawarah, menghargai pendapat teman, dan bertanggung jawab terhadap keputusan bersama" (Interview with Teacher, 15 May 2025).*

The excerpt connects knowledge of Pancasila with opportunities to practise its values. It supports the interpretation that teachers deliberately designed participatory experiences. However, the reported material does not show the distribution of speaking time, whether dissent changed a decision, or how quieter pupils participated. The strongest supported finding is that opportunities for deliberation were offered; equal influence among students remains to be established.

School routines as civic learning opportunities

Collective classroom cleaning, flag ceremonies, religious activities, and collaborative projects were described as recurring features of school life. These activities placed children in relationships of mutual obligation and collective responsibility. Their civic significance depended on how students understood their roles and whether they could contribute to the organization of shared tasks. The principal explained:

> *"Pendidikan demokrasi bagi anak usia sekolah dasar bukan berarti mengajarkan politik praktis, tetapi membentuk kesadaran bahwa setiap anak memiliki hak untuk didengar, memiliki kewajiban untuk menghargai orang lain, dan mampu hidup bersama dalam keberagaman" (Interview with Principal, 18 May 2025).*

This account frames political education through rights, reciprocal respect, and coexistence. It also offers a criterion for evaluating routines: being heard should have recognizable consequences in school relationships. The available evidence establishes the presence of collective activities and the principal's stated rationale, but not the degree to which students participated in setting the rules that governed those activities.

Teachers as mediators of participation

Teachers reported using discussion, problem-solving, and collaborative assignments to connect civic concepts with experience. The observation account describes encouragement and positive reinforcement for respectful communication and cooperation. One teacher stated:

> *"Kami berusaha mengubah pola pembelajaran dari sekadar memberikan materi menjadi membangun pengalaman. Ketika siswa belajar mengambil keputusan bersama, menyelesaikan konflik kecil, dan menghargai perbedaan, sebenarnya mereka sedang belajar demokrasi" (Interview with Teacher, 20 May 2025).*

The teacher's account suggests an intentional shift in pedagogical emphasis. Adult guidance remained central: teachers selected activities, organized participation, and interpreted appropriate behaviour. The findings therefore indicate mediated participation, rather than the disappearance of teacher authority. Students were described as showing confidence in expressing opinions, but the absence of repeated measurements prevents this observation from establishing a sustained increase attributable to the approach.

Connecting religious ethics and Pancasila

The school's account presents Islamic moral teaching and Pancasila as mutually supportive resources for fairness, compassion, responsibility, and respect. The principal expressed this relationship as follows:

> *"Nilai keislaman dan nilai Pancasila tidak bertentangan. Keduanya sama-sama mengajarkan kebaikan, kepedulian, keadilan, dan penghargaan terhadap sesama manusia. Karena itu, sekolah mengintegrasikan keduanya dalam pembentukan karakter siswa" (Interview with Principal, 18 May 2025).*

This statement demonstrates the leadership's integration rationale. It does not independently demonstrate how pupils negotiate conflicting perspectives or encounter religious diversity. The finding is therefore located at the level of institutional meaning and the reported pedagogical approach. Whether that approach produces inclusive conduct across different social settings requires more direct evidence from children and their interactions.

Across the four themes, the case suggests connections among understanding civic principles, recognizing others' perspectives, and participating responsibly in shared activities. These are useful analytical dimensions rather than separately measured outcomes. The evidence is strongest for the organization of democratic learning opportunities and educators' intentions. Claims about internalized character, lasting perspective change, or behaviour beyond school are more limited.

Discussion

From civic knowledge to democratic practice

The findings support treating political education as an organization of social experience as well as a curriculum of ideas. Group discussion and collective task allocation can make deliberation and responsibility understandable through concrete decisions. However, democratic education contains distinct normative commitments: an orderly classroom may promote cooperation while providing little space for disagreement or challenges to unfair rules (Sant, 2019). In this case, the analytically important feature is not simply that students worked together, but that teachers described opportunities to express opinions and negotiate shared responsibilities. This interpretation connects the observations to democratic participation without assuming that every cooperative activity is democratic.

The distinction between knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour also qualifies claims of transformation. Civic education research supports several educational pathways but does not justify treating them as producing identical outcomes (Campbell, 2019; Jerome et al., 2024). A quasi-experimental study of on-site citizenship education, for example, found a lasting knowledge effect without corresponding effects on political attitudes and behaviours (Mulder, 2023). Although that study concerns older students in a different country, its methodological lesson is relevant: improvement in one civic domain cannot stand in for evidence in another. The Cirebon case therefore indicates promising learning conditions, while the persistence and transfer of democratic dispositions remain questions for further research.

Transformative learning as an interpretive possibility

The teachers' accounts describe movement from explaining values to creating experiences in which children must consider others. This can be interpreted as an opening for transformation when pupils reconsider an initial preference, recognize another child's legitimate claim, or revise a shared decision. Perspective-transformation scholarship highlights the social and practical dimensions of such change rather than treating it as an exclusively individual cognitive event (Hoggan et al., 2017). The present case adds a school-level interpretation: teacher guidance and shared routines can provide occasions for reconsideration within familiar relationships.

Nevertheless, adult transformative-learning theory cannot be transferred directly to elementary pupils. The reported evidence does not document a sequence of an initial perspective, a reflective challenge, and a sustained revised understanding. The term transformative therefore describes a pedagogical orientation and a plausible process, not a verified developmental outcome. A stronger empirical test would trace particular classroom episodes over time and

incorporate pupils' explanations of what changed in their thinking. This qualification preserves the value of the concept while preventing ordinary participation from being relabelled automatically as transformation.

Student voice and the distribution of influence

Classroom discussion is educationally important, but voice becomes democratically meaningful when adults respond to what children say. Research distinguishes the structures that enable voice from the relationships that determine access, representation, and responsiveness (Holquist et al., 2023; Mitra, 2018). Research on deliberation also connects an open classroom climate with the surrounding school context, emphasizing that discussion cannot be understood separately from institutional relationships (Maurissen et al., 2018). The teacher's invitation to express an opinion is thus a starting point. The stronger question is whether a pupil's proposal can alter a task allocation, classroom agreement, or approach to a conflict. The available data do not document this decision trail, so the case cannot yet establish the depth of students' influence.

Primary-school research also cautions that representative pupils can become privileged intermediaries whose voices do not encompass those of their peers (Mayes et al., 2019). In this case, the statement that every child has a right to be heard should therefore be read as an institutional commitment requiring practical safeguards. Rotating responsibilities, offering paired discussion before public speaking, and accepting written or visual responses are possible ways to widen access. These are recommendations derived from the participation problem, not activities newly claimed as observed at the school.

Lundy's analysis of tokenism adds a further qualification: limited participation can still become a step toward more meaningful engagement when adults give children clear feedback (Lundy, 2018). A useful school practice would explain which proposals were adopted, which were not, and why. This makes adult accountability visible and helps students distinguish consultation from decision-making authority. Research reviewing student and teacher voice also invites attention to both groups' experiences rather than assuming that their interpretations coincide (Gillett-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024). Future reporting should therefore include direct student accounts of whether they feel listened to and whether speaking carries interpersonal risks.

Teacher authority and democratic modelling

The findings show that teachers mediate democratic experience through communication, task design, and responses to disagreement. This mediation is consistent with research connecting civic teaching beliefs to instructional strategies (Knowles, 2018). Teacher authority is not inherently incompatible with democracy: young children need guidance, protection, and workable boundaries. The relevant distinction concerns how that authority is exercised. Explaining a rule, inviting objections, and acknowledging a mistaken decision demonstrate forms of accountable authority; requiring agreement merely because an adult has spoken offers a different civic lesson.

Moral education also involves responding to a world and to other people who are not simply extensions of the learner's preferences (Biesta, 2021). In this light, democratic teaching requires more than maximizing self-expression. It includes helping pupils encounter limits, recognize others' needs, and accept responsibility for shared outcomes. The teachers' emphasis on respect and collective decisions is consistent with this orientation, but concrete examples of how they handle uncomfortable disagreement would strengthen the evidence.

Teacher development should consequently address difficult situations as well as participatory techniques. Research on citizenship teaching and education policy identifies tensions between democratic aims, teachers' preparation, and institutional expectations (Sant et al., 2024; Weinberg & Flinders, 2018). Applied to this case, professional learning could focus on facilitating disagreement, responding to exclusion, and judging when a decision can be shared

with pupils. Such work would reduce dependence on individual enthusiasm and make the school's democratic commitments more consistent across classrooms.

School culture and the difference between cooperation and compliance

The range of school routines suggests that civic learning extends beyond formal lessons. Research identifies different participatory possibilities in classroom, co-curricular, and informal spaces (Graham et al., 2018). Similarly, a review of whole-school interventions distinguishes students exercising decision-making roles from students receiving activities planned entirely by adults (Berti et al., 2023). These distinctions clarify the evidence at SD Islam Al Azhar 3 Cirebon: cleaning together or joining a ceremony demonstrates participation in an activity, but it does not necessarily demonstrate participation in governing that activity.

The democratic potential of gotong royong is strongest when students understand the purpose of collective work, share responsibilities fairly, and can raise concerns about unequal burdens. Otherwise, apparently harmonious cooperation may conceal exclusion or unexamined obedience. Character education scholarship emphasizes recognition and intersubjective relationships, directing attention to whether children experience themselves and others as worthy of respect (Bates, 2019). The case therefore invites evaluation of routine interactions, including whose work is valued and whose objections are taken seriously, rather than relying only on the visible completion of group tasks.

Indonesian research describes habituation, integration, and imitation as strategies for character education, while also reporting implementation difficulties when familiar interaction conditions change (Hidayat et al., 2022). This supports attention to the consistency of school culture, but it does not imply that repetition alone guarantees internalization. Reflection is needed to connect a routine with its moral justification. Brief discussion of fairness after a shared activity could help students explain why cooperation matters, while providing teachers with evidence beyond compliance.

Islamic ethics and Pancasila as resources for inclusion

The principal's account positions religious and national commitments as complementary foundations for school life. The significance of this finding lies in how educators interpret and enact that relationship. Research in pesantren-based schooling similarly documents integration through policy and educational programmes, but also identifies teachers' difficulties in joining Islamic and Pancasila values in practice (Murdiono et al., 2017). The Cirebon case therefore contributes an institutional example of an integration rationale, not proof that such integration is always straightforward.

A democratic interpretation requires fairness and respect to extend beyond agreement or group membership. Evidence from intercultural participatory projects shows how dialogue and shared project design can foster attention to others and collaborative relationships (Caetano et al., 2020). Because those studies concern older pupils and different settings, they provide a comparative lens rather than direct evidence about this school. For the present case, the resulting question is whether religious moral language helps children listen to unfamiliar perspectives and protect a peer's dignity during disagreement. Direct observation of such encounters would be more informative than general statements of compatibility.

Pancasila can provide a shared vocabulary for articulating this responsibility, while Islamic ethical teaching can offer locally meaningful reasons for acting with compassion and fairness. The analytical contribution is the possibility of reciprocal reinforcement through practice. A limitation is that the reported account includes little direct evidence of religious or social diversity among participants. It would therefore be inappropriate to conclude that the school has demonstrated cross-religious tolerance solely from its leaders' stated commitments.

Developmentally appropriate and equitable civic learning

For elementary pupils, civic principles are more accessible when linked to decisions about turns, resources, responsibilities, and peer conflict. Research on Pancasila competencies distinguishes expectations for lower and upper elementary grades, emphasizing developmental appropriateness (Ruyadi & Dahliyana, 2022). Work on locally grounded civic learning and Socratic reflection through traditional games offers concrete Indonesian examples of connecting values with experience (Hafina et al., 2022; Sumardjoko & Musyiam, 2018). These studies support the relevance of contextual pedagogy, while their distinct designs and settings prevent their results from being treated as confirmation of this case's effectiveness.

The practical implication is to specify what an age-appropriate democratic contribution looks like. A younger pupil might give a simple reason for sharing materials; an older pupil might compare competing proposals or explain why a majority decision needs to protect a minority. These examples are proposed learning indicators rather than measured outcomes in the current study. Their value lies in making the relationship between a civic principle and an observable action explicit, so assessment does not depend on broad labels such as "good character."

Equity must also be examined within participation. Primary-school evidence from England identifies unequal civic-learning opportunities, while research in secondary education examines whether civic education can reduce participation inequalities (Body et al., 2024; Weinberg, 2022). Neither finding determines the pattern at this Indonesian school. Together, however, they motivate asking who receives meaningful opportunities to contribute. A child's quietness should not automatically be interpreted as low civic competence, nor should fluent public speaking be treated as the sole indicator of democratic engagement.

Institutional implications and limits of transfer

The case suggests a practical relationship among explicit values, supported participation, and institutional responsiveness. Student-centred civic education scholarship emphasizes drawing on learners' interests and experiences, rather than positioning them only as deficient future citizens (Heggart et al., 2019). A broader review similarly identifies school ethos, teacher–student relationships, and the organization of civic projects as important considerations (Jerome et al., 2024). For SD Islam Al Azhar 3 Cirebon, this points toward linking classroom agreements, collaborative activities, and school leadership responses so that students encounter a coherent approach across settings.

This interpretation remains conditional. The study does not provide a comparison school, a longitudinal design, systematic student-outcome measures, or sufficiently detailed reporting of sampling and analysis. Educators' positive accounts may also differ from students' experiences. Future studies should incorporate children's perspectives, examine contrary cases, and trace the handling of specific proposals or conflicts over time. Comparative work across Islamic elementary schools and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah could then investigate which processes are shared and which depend on institutional arrangements. The present contribution is a set of context-grounded propositions about democratic learning, rather than a universally validated model.

CONCLUSION

At SD Islam Al Azhar 3 Cirebon, the reported integration of Pancasila into classroom discussion, shared responsibilities, and school routines provides opportunities for children to encounter democratic values through everyday practice. Teachers and school leadership connect these opportunities with Islamic ethical commitments, framing fairness, responsibility, respect, and collective decision-making as related educational aims. The findings identify an institutional orientation toward participatory civic learning.

The evidence is strongest for educators' intentions and the organization of learning opportunities. It does not establish that all pupils have equal influence, that civic dispositions persist outside school, or that lasting transformation has occurred. Democratic character should therefore be evaluated through the quality of participation, reasons offered in decisions, responsiveness to disagreement, and treatment of less-heard peers, rather than inferred from orderly cooperation alone.

The practical priorities are to widen participation, make responses to student proposals explicit, develop teachers' capacity to facilitate disagreement, and align classroom practices with school governance. Further research should strengthen methodological reporting, include direct child perspectives, and follow specific civic experiences over time. These steps would allow the promising relationship among Pancasila, religious ethics, and participatory pedagogy to be assessed with greater precision.

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