Implementation of character values in project activities for Phase C primary school students in South Sulawesi

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Article info	Abstract
Keywords: Character values, project, primary school	The purpose of this study is to identify the implementation of character values through the execution of project activities, which serves as a case study for Phase C primary school students at SD Inpres 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae, Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with data obtained from the principal, teachers, and students at the elementary school. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of four components: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the project was implemented in accordance with the established guidelines, covering the introduction, contextualization, action, reflection, and follow-up stages. The character values reinforced through this project include faith and devotion to God Almighty, global diversity, collaboration, and creativity. The project's outcome was a performance of traditional dances from various regions, presented during the exhibition. Therefore, the project's implementation serves as a platform for elementary school students to develop their competencies and strengthen their character in line with the Pancasila student profile, ultimately contributing to achieving national education goals.

1. Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in human life, as it enables individuals to broaden their knowledge, foster creativity, adapt to the demands of a changing era, and shape their personalities and mindsets in more positive directions (Junengsih & Manan, 2024; Wati et al., 2025). More than merely a process of transferring knowledge, education also serves as a strategic means to shape character and

strengthen national identity. It plays a pivotal role in developing an outstanding generation not only in terms of academic achievement but also in character formation grounded in the noble values of Pancasila (Darmansyah et al., 2024; Fandu Anugrah et al., 2025).

The curriculum must be aligned with students' needs, particularly in the context of social life, where respect for cultural diversity and the ability to work collaboratively are essential. Furthermore, the curriculum should also prepare students to face future workforce challenges by emphasizing the mastery of skills such as analytical thinking for problem-solving and independence in completing tasks (Cohen & Cohen, 2023; Nurmala et al., 2025; Sun & Goodyear, 2020). In line with this direction, the government has undertaken a series of curriculum reforms since 1947, culminating in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum as a tangible manifestation of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy (Monalisa et al., 2025).

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes flexible, student-centered learning to enable learners to become competent individuals with critical reasoning skills and strong character. The essence of the *Merdeka Curriculum* lies in strengthening students' character, which is developed in harmony with the values and cultural wisdom of the Indonesian nation (Daga, 2021; Mukaromah et al., 2025). One of the distinctive features of the Merdeka Curriculum is its project-based learning approach, which is designed to develop students' soft skills and shape their character in alignment with the Pancasila Student Profile through these activities (Basri, Muh et al., 2025).

According to Mulyasa, character education is an effort to guide the physical and mental development of children from their natural disposition toward a more civilized and humane life. Character education is also viewed as a continuous quality improvement process aimed at shaping future generations in line with the nation's cultural values (Ery Maritim et al., 2025). Character education can begin by formulating the school's vision and mission, which are then realized through school regulations to ensure that character values become an integral part of the school culture (Baba et al., 2022; Satrial et al., 2024). Character education is a deliberate, intentional, and planned effort to instill character values in children. This systematic approach encompasses the development of cognitive aspects, awareness, intention, motivation, and behavior, enabling children to internalize and apply these values in their daily lives (Rofi'ie et al., 2017; Nugrahanta et al., 2024). Instilling character values in children is crucial, as they are in a critical stage of development. Character education aims to enhance the quality of both the educational process and outcomes, thereby shaping students' morals and noble character comprehensively, integrally, and in balance, in accordance with the applicable graduation competency standards at each educational institution (Vinona et al., 2024). Therefore, character education needs to be systematically integrated into the curriculum and learning practices through collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

England can illustrate the implementation of character education across various countries. As Dishon stated, during the 19th century in the Victorian era, elite 'public' schools focused on character development through team games and physical activities, aiming to instill discipline and leadership qualities (Bates, 2019). According to data from the Saudi Ministry of Education in 2019, the country, through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has implemented various initiatives in character and citizenship education over the past 10 years. One such program is the Global Citizen Forum, part of a national campaign in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which aims to encourage various stakeholders—including parents, teachers, imams, and government and private officials—to serve as role models for their communities (Osman, 2024). Furthermore, Bowman emphasizes that character development can be achieved through the integration of various educational aspects, including curricular and co-curricular activities and social interactions, which collectively shape students' personalities (Rockenbach, 2020). This process requires applying virtues such as honesty, empathy, and open-mindedness, which simultaneously support both character development and students' personal growth (Peterson, 2020).

Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Permendikbud) No. 56/M/2022, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project is a co-curricular activity designed as a form of interdisciplinary learning aimed at examining various environmental issues and evaluating potential solutions that can be implemented to support the development of the Pancasila Student Profile (Wati et al., 2025). At the early childhood, primary, and secondary education levels, the implementation of co-curricular activities is mandated at a minimum through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (M. R. Satria et al., 2024). Its implementation is flexible in terms of content, activity type, and duration, serving as a strategic effort to optimize achievement of the Pancasila Student Profile (Hamzah, 2024; Permendikbud No. 56/M/2022). The Pancasila Student Profile consists of six main components: first, faith and devotion to God Almighty with noble character; second, independence; third, cooperation; fourth, awareness of global diversity; fifth, critical thinking skills; and sixth, creativity. These six profiles represent the character traits intended to be developed in Indonesian students through various intramural, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities (Utami et al., 2025). Through this project, students are provided with opportunities to gain direct experiences that not only strengthen their character but also encourage them to learn from their surrounding environment. In its implementation, students explore a variety of themes and key issues, including engineering and technology, sustainable lifestyles, local wisdom, entrepreneurship, physical and mental well-being, and unity in diversity. Consequently, they can undertake concrete actions in line with their developmental stage and individual needs (Satria, Adiprima, Wulan, et al., 2022).

However, various studies have shown that the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) in practice has not yet been fully optimized. A survey by Tatan Suryadi and Dinn Wahyudin indicates that educators' limited understanding of the project's application suggests their understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum remains suboptimal. Several factors contribute to this low level of awareness, including limited teacher training opportunities (Suryadi & Wahyudin, 2024). In line with this, a study by Prasetya et al. (2022) found that implementing the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Program (P5) faces various challenges, particularly regarding educators' understanding of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Some teachers reported that they were not yet fully prepared to manage project-based activities effectively and expressed the need for ongoing training to deepen their understanding of the project-based learning approach (Aulia et al., 2025).

The findings indicate a gap between the ideal objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum policy and the realities of learning practices in primary schools. Teachers are expected to apply a project-based approach to internalize character values; however, in practice, they still face limitations in knowledge, skills, and technical support. This situation underscores the need for research that not only illustrates the challenges of implementing the Pancasila student profile strengthening project activities but also explains how teachers strive to translate character values into concrete project activities. Therefore, this study has urgency in providing an in-depth empirical account of the implementation practices of the Pancasila student profile-strengthening project activities in primary schools, particularly within the theme Bhinneka Tunggal Ika for Phase C students. This research not only captures teachers' understanding but also presents practical solutions in the form of implementable strategies and best practices that can be replicated in similar educational contexts.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, the research problem addressed in this study is: How is character development implemented through project-based activities for Phase C elementary school students in Indonesia? Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the implementation of character values through project-based activities for Phase C elementary school students in Indonesia.

Rahma Ashari Hamzah et al.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the application of character values within the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, a co-curricular activity implemented under the Merdeka Curriculum. The qualitative descriptive approach is a research method that presents data in the form of verbal descriptions, either written or oral, obtained from individuals, groups, or organizations that serve as the objects of study. Data are collected and analyzed comprehensively in accordance with the contextual realities of the subjects under investigation (Lestari et al., 2023). A qualitative research design was selected because it enables the study to reveal and narratively describe the various activities undertaken and their influence on the subjects' lives (Fadli, 2021). The stages of implementing character values in the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile begin with the introduction stage, followed by the context stage, the action stage, and the reflection and follow-up stage (Indriyani et al., 2025).

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument in understanding and interpreting various observed phenomena, events, and social situations. Therefore, the researcher needs adequate theoretical grounding to analyze discrepancies between theoretical concepts and the realities encountered in the field (Waruwu, 2023). Thus, in this study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for both data collection and analysis. The researcher's role is both participatory and reflective, involving active engagement and interaction with research subjects. The techniques employed include direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of character values through project-based learning.

The research was conducted in South Sulawesi Province, precisely at SD Negeri 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae in Soppeng Regency. The school was selected as the research site because it is one of the nationally designated Sekolah Penggerak (Driving Schools) in the first cohort, serving as a catalyst for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum over the years. At that time, only five regencies/cities nationwide were selected, including Soppeng Regency. Furthermore, the school was nationally recognized as a model institution for disseminating best practices to other schools in the region, particularly in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which is closely linked to the execution of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. The research subjects were elementary school students in Phase C, namely fifth- and sixth-grade students, who applied character values in the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile. The key informants were the principal and the fifth- and sixth-grade teachers, or homeroom teachers. Data collection for this study was carried out from May 3 to May 31, 2025, specifically on Saturdays during the implementation of co-curricular activities in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

The data collection techniques employed in this study included documentation, observation, and interviews, utilizing corresponding instruments for each method. Field data collection was intended not only to produce findings of practical relevance but also to contribute to theoretical development or generate new insights within the field under study (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). The supplementary data in this study included photographic documentation, video recordings, anecdotal notes, field notes, personal documents, memos, and other relevant records.

The observations were conducted with fifth- and sixth-grade students in Phase C and their teachers. These observations were conducted during the implementation of the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, which aimed to identify the character values students demonstrated. The observation period lasted one month and was carried out exclusively on Saturdays, as the project was scheduled weekly on that day from 07:30 WITA until the end of the school day at 12:00 WITA, with a 4.5-hour session duration.

Documentation data were collected from various sources, including the school profile, school curriculum, project modules, project theme identification, supporting equipment and facilities, students' daily activities, and assessments or evaluations of character strengthening implemented at the school. All collected data were then mapped based on their relevance and interrelationships

and subsequently classified according to the research's thematic focus.

The interview technique employed in this study was semi-structured interviewing. This method used a set of prepared guiding questions, allowing the researcher to explore the information further through follow-up questions. Such an approach enables responsiveness to the informants' answers and facilitates a deeper understanding of the topic under discussion (Belawati Pandiangan et al., 2024). Each informant was interviewed twice to obtain more in-depth data regarding the implementation of character values in the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, specifically for Phase C.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through the application of various triangulation techniques to test the credibility of the findings. Triangulation was carried out by verifying and comparing data obtained from multiple sources, methods, and timeframes (Alfansyur et al., 2020; Husnullail et al., 2024). Two types of triangulation were employed in this study, namely source triangulation and technique triangulation.

Triangulation was conducted by combining observation, interviews, and document analysis using the same data sources: teachers and students participating in the project. Observations were carried out during the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project to record behaviors, interactions, and the application of character values in the classroom. The observation results were then verified through in-depth interviews with teachers and students to obtain contextual explanations of the field findings. Subsequently, assessment documents and project activity reports were analyzed to confirm the consistency between empirical data and administrative evidence.

Meanwhile, source triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from different informants, including classroom teachers, school principals, and students. Information gathered from one informant was cross-checked through interviews with other informants to ensure data consistency. For instance, teachers' statements regarding the challenges in implementing character values within project activities were verified through the perspectives of school principals and direct observations of students' activities.

In addition, cross-validation was conducted with other teachers and the school principal to ensure the accuracy of the observation and interview results. This process was further strengthened by supporting documentation, such as photographs and videos of the project activities, which served as additional evidence for data credibility. (Samsu et al., 2017; Widiastuti et al., 2024). Thus, the simultaneous application of technique triangulation and source triangulation not only enhanced the reliability and credibility of the data but also ensured that the research findings genuinely represented the actual conditions in the field.

The data analysis process in this study followed the Miles and Huberman model. The analysis stages included data reduction, data display, and conclusion (Suyitno et al., 2025). The data reduction process began with transcribing interview results into written form and preparing tables. Observation data were also documented as written narratives supported by photographic and video evidence. Subsequently, documents such as project modules, assessment results, and multimedia records of the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile activities were grouped according to relevance to the study. The collected data were then identified by selecting and sorting them according to the research focus. The available information was aligned with the research objectives through summarization and classification by topic or theme, specifically the implementation of character values through the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile. Data presentation was carried out using tables, charts, flow diagrams, and narrative descriptions. The process of drawing conclusions involved interpreting the data based on the theoretical framework employed, compiling it into reports, and verifying the data to identify meanings, patterns, causal relationships, propositions, and emerging configurations.

3. Result

The research site was SD Negeri 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae, located in Soppeng Regency. This school is one of the institutions selected to participate in the first cohort of the School Driving Program, in accordance with the official decision (Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Pendidikan Dasar, Dan Pendidikan Menengah Nomor 6555/C/HK.00/2021 Tentang Penetapan Satuan Pendidikan Pelaksana Program Sekolah Penggerak, 2021). As an elementary school, SD Negeri 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae catalyzes the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to foster educational transformation in the region, thereby improving the quality of student learning outcomes. The school was also selected as a Pilot School in the first cohort, in accordance with the official decision. The school also serves as a mentor to other schools, guiding them on implementing the Merdeka Curriculum across intramural, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. The beneficiary schools, all located within Soppeng Regency, include: 1) SD Negeri 103 Cabbenge (Lilirilau District); 2) SD Negeri 256 Benteng Jati (Liliriaja District); and 3) SD Negeri 80 Paomallimpoe (Ganra District). This statement aligns with the interview findings from the school principal, who stated that:

"Our school, SD Negeri 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae, was selected as a Driving School in 2021. During this period, both the principal and teachers received guidance from the Driving School program's facilitators for approximately 3 years on implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at the elementary school level. The support activities were extensive and diverse, including principal coaching sessions, Operational Management Working Group (PMO) activities, workshops, learning committee workshops, field visits, and various other activities designed to enhance our understanding of applying the Merdeka Curriculum. In 2024, our school was also designated as a Pilot School responsible for mentoring three other schools within Soppeng Regency. Before conducting mentoring activities, we received additional training from resource persons on effectively implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. We hope that the experience and knowledge we have gained will be passed on to other schools so that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum aligns with the guidelines and expectations, ultimately improving student learning outcomes, especially for elementary school students." (Interview, May 24, 2025)

Before implementing the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila student profile, a meeting was held involving all school stakeholders. The purpose of this meeting was to establish the project implementation team, identify the school's readiness stages, determine the dimensions, themes, and time allocation for the project activities, develop the project module, and design the project reporting strategy in accordance with the guidelines. (Satria, Adiprima, Sekar, et al., 2022). Referring to the development guidelines for the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile published by the Agency for Standards, Curriculum, and Educational Assessment of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, six themes can be implemented at the elementary school level (Cornelia et al., 2024; Rachmadyanti et al., 2024). The six themes include: sustainable lifestyle, local wisdom, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity), building body and soul, engineering and technology, and entrepreneurship. The Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile for the second semester (even semester) of the 2024/2025 academic year at SDN 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae adopted the theme of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika with the topic "AKRAB" (Aku, Kamu, Rukun, Antar Budaya — Me, You, Harmony, Intercultural). This activity targeted fifth- and sixth-grade students in Phase C, aiming to strengthen four dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile: (1) faithful and devoted to God Almighty and possessing noble character; (2) embracing global diversity; (3) practicing cooperation; and (4) being creative. This statement aligns with the results of an interview with a teacher who expressed that:

"The implementation of the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile at SD Negeri 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae has entered its fourth year. For each selection of themes, character dimensions, and related matters, meetings are consistently held involving all school

stakeholders. These meetings are crucial for gathering suggestions and feedback concerning the co-curricular or project activities to be carried out. According to the meeting outcomes, the theme chosen for the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year is Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, with the character dimensions strengthened being: (1) faith and devotion to God Almighty and noble character; (2) global diversity; (3) cooperation; and (4) creativity." (Interview, May 24, 2025)

Table 1. Dimensions, elements, sub-elements, and targets of the pancasila student profile

Dimensions	Elements	Sub Elemen	Target
Believing, Fearful of the Almighty God, and Noble	Moral Elements in Humans	Prioritize similarities with others and respect differences	Identifying similarities with others as a glue for social relationships and embodying them in group activities. Beginning to recognize various possible interpretations and different perspectives when faced with a dilemma.
Global Berkebhinnekaan	Recognizing and appreciating culture	Delving into culture and cultural identity	Identify and describe ideas about oneself and various groups in the surrounding environment, and how other people behave and communicate with them.
Cooperation	Collaboration	Cooperation	Demonstrate actions that align with the group's expectations and goals
		Communication to achieve common goals	Understand the information conveyed (expressions, thoughts, feelings, and concerns) by others and convey information accurately using various symbols and media.
Creative	Generating original ideas	Generating original ideas	Generating new, meaningful, imaginative ideas from several different ideas as an expression of thoughts or feelings
	Produce original works and actions.	Produce original works and actions.	Explore and express thoughts and/or feelings according to interests and preferences in the form of works and/or actions to appreciate works.

The implementation of this project is motivated by field conditions in which the majority of students still possess limited knowledge of Indonesia's cultural diversity, particularly regarding traditional songs, customary clothing, and traditional dances. Through this project, students are expected to broaden their understanding of these cultural riches and translate them into concrete actions that introduce the nation's culture within their local environment. This statement aligns with an interview with a teacher who expressed that:

"It is true that the implementation of this project stems from real conditions in the field, where the majority of students still have a limited understanding of Indonesia's cultural diversity. For instance, students' knowledge—especially regarding traditional songs, customary clothing, and traditional dances—remains minimal. It is hoped that through this project, students will broaden their insights into these cultural treasures. Moreover, students are expected to apply the knowledge gained through concrete actions, such as introducing the nation's culture to the local community." (Interview, May 24, 2025)

The project activities consist of several stages. First is the introduction stage, conducted during the initial meeting through interactive games where students share stories about their classmates' regions of origin. Next, students are divided into groups to discuss and match images of regional cultural artifacts with their respective areas. Each group then analyzes and presents the discussion

results. The second stage is contextualization, where students connect the knowledge they have acquired to the context of cultural diversity, concluding that understanding traditional songs, customary clothing, and traditional dances is important. This stage is followed by the action phase, which involves a cultural performance showcasing their learning outcomes. The final stage is reflection and follow-up, during which students conduct campaigns to preserve traditional songs, attire, and dances, and reflect on their learning experiences throughout the project. This statement aligns with an interview with a teacher who stated that:

"The project activities were carried out through several structured stages, beginning with the introduction stage, which involved interactive games during the initial meeting. Next, at the contextualization stage, students connected the knowledge they had acquired with cultural diversity, fostering an understanding of the importance of traditional songs, customary clothing, and traditional dances. The subsequent stage involved action: a cultural performance showcasing their learning outcomes. The project concluded with the reflection and follow-up stage, where students conducted campaigns to preserve traditional songs, attire, and dances, accompanied by reflections on their learning experiences throughout the project." (Interview, May 24, 2025)

The entire sequence of stages in this project aims not only to enhance students' knowledge of Indonesia's cultural diversity but also to cultivate an appreciative attitude and a sense of pride in the nation's cultural heritage. Through direct experiences—from introduction to concrete action and reflection—students gain more meaningful learning by actively engaging, collaborating in groups, and making tangible contributions toward preserving culture in their local environment.

INTRODUCTION STAGE
- Activity 1 (Fun Game)
- Activity 2 (Find My Match)
- Activity 3-4 (Exploring Indonesia)

CONTEXTUALIZATION STAGE
- Activity 5: (Share Your Culture)
- Activity 6: (If Not Us, Then Who)
- Activity 7: (Boundless Creativity)
- Activity 8: (All Friends Are Good)

ACTION STAGE
- Activity 9: (Searching for Regional Songs and Dances)
- Activities 10-14: (Practicing Regional Songs, Costumes, and Dances)
- Activity 15: (Cultural Performance)

REFLECTION AND FOLLOW-UP STAGE
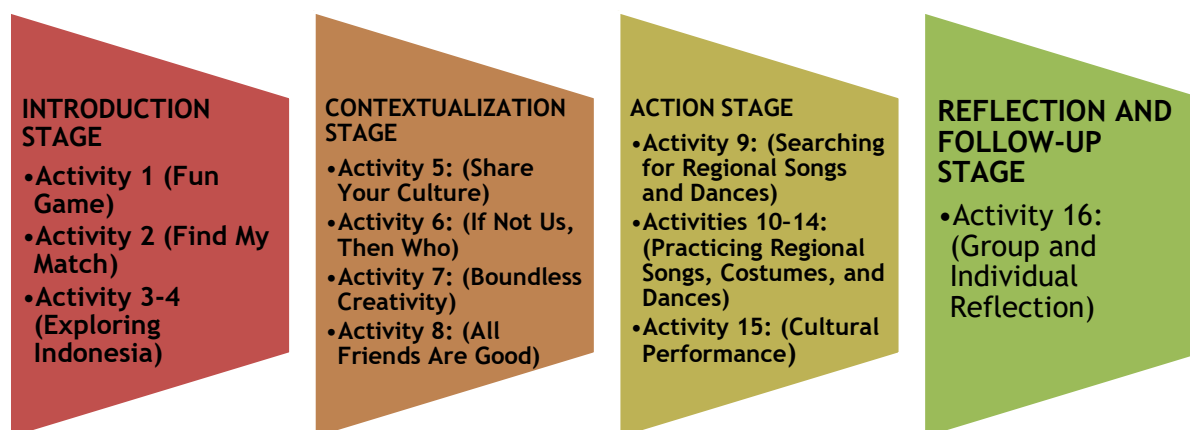- Activity 16: (Group and Individual Reflection)

Figure 1. Stages of character value implementation in the project to strengthen the pancasila student profile activities

Based on data from observations, interviews, and documentation, the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile was implemented in four stages: the introduction stage, the contextualization stage, the action stage, and the reflection and follow-up stage. The following is a detailed description of the findings.

3.1 Implementation of character values through project activities: Introduction stage

The introduction stage in the implementation of project activities serves as a crucial initial step to build students' understanding of the objectives, themes, and character values to be developed. At this stage, the teacher serves as a facilitator, creating a warm, open, and inclusive learning environment that motivates students to participate actively. Through various strategies such as

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Page 1070

interactive games, initial discussions, and contextual theme introductions, students are guided to recognize the meaning of the character values emphasized in the project. This approach not only helps foster initial awareness but also nurtures students' sense of engagement and ownership of the learning process ahead.

Based on observations and interviews, this introductory stage served as a crucial foundation for fostering early awareness of character values. The teacher not only introduced the project theme "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" but also built spiritual meaning through reflective activities that cultivated gratitude for diversity. For instance, when the teacher connected the beauty of Indonesian culture with God's creation, several students expressed pride and admiration for this divine gift. This indicates the internalization of the sub-elements "being grateful for God's blessings" and "appreciating God's creations" within the dimension of faith in God Almighty and noble character. During cultural sharing and video-viewing activities on Indonesia's diversity, students demonstrated enthusiasm and curiosity about other cultures. Some students even asked about the meaning of dance movements from regions unfamiliar to them. This phenomenon reflects the sub-element "exploring culture and cultural identity" within the dimension of global diversity, where students began to recognize diversity as a valuable asset rather than a divisive difference.

The value of cooperation was clearly observed when students participated in collaborative culture-themed games. They shared tasks, discussed answers, and supported group members who encountered difficulties. The teacher noted improvements in students' communication and collaboration skills, which align with the sub-element "collaboration and communication to achieve common goals." The creative activity of composing new versions of regional song lyrics also demonstrated students' ability to express original ideas. One group, for example, modified the lyrics of the song "Ampar-Ampar Pisang" to include a theme of school cooperation. This initiative illustrates the development of the sub-element "producing original ideas and works" within the creative dimension. Through these activities, students not only learned about culture but also engaged in imaginative creation to express character values through artistic work.

Table 2. Character values emerging in the introduction stage

INTRODUCTION STAGE

No	Character values	Activity	Activity description
1.	Believing in and Piety to the Almighty God as well as Noble Morals	Inviting students to appreciate and be grateful for cultural diversity as God's creation	The teacher facilitated a discussion on the meaning of cultural diversity as a manifestation of God's creation and encouraged students to express gratitude.
		Playing regional songs that contain moral values or messages of goodness	Students sang traditional regional songs and subsequently discussed the moral messages and values of goodness they contained.
		Self-reflection to recognize personal potential in dancing or singing.	Students wrote about aspects of their artistic abilities for which they were grateful.
2.	Global Diversity	Sharing knowledge about each region of origin, ethnicity, traditional food, and regional songs	Students presented their respective local cultures and engaged in positive discussions comparing cultural differences.
		Watching a video about Indonesia's cultural diversity.	The teacher presented a video on traditions from various regions and facilitated a discussion of the messages they convey.

INTRODUCTION STAGE

No	Character values	Activity	Activity description
3.	Cooperate	Collaborative culture-themed games	Students collaborated to identify regional cultures through group games
		Cross-group discussions	Students engaged in discussions to discover shared values among different cultures.
4.	Creative	Composing new versions of regional song lyrics.	Students modified traditional regional song lyrics to make them more relevant to their daily lives.

Overall, the introductory stage functioned as an entry point for developing contextual and relevant awareness of character values. The enjoyable, participatory, and meaningful learning experiences made this stage effective in nurturing spiritual, social, and creative values that form the foundation of the Pancasila student profile.

3.2 Implementation of character values through project activities: contextualization stage

The contextualization stage is a critical phase in project activities that connects the learning theme with students' real-life experiences. At this stage, teachers assist students in understanding the relevance of the material and character values being studied through direct observation, case studies, or analysis of real-life situations in their surrounding environment. By relating learning concepts to everyday contexts, students can internalize character values in a more meaningful and practical way. This process not only broadens their perspectives but also develops critical thinking skills, empathy, and social awareness, which are essential in shaping the Pancasila student profile.

Table 3. Character values emerging in the contextualization stage

CONTEXTUALIZATION STAGE

No	Character Values	Activity	Activity description
1.	Believing in and Piety to the Almighty God as well as Noble Morals	Remembering the cultural diversity learned in the "Explore Indonesia" activity can foster a sense of gratitude for God's diverse creations.	Students were invited to reflect on Indonesia's cultural diversity and relate it to gratitude for God's creations.
		Telling personal experiences about the culture of the region of origin in relation to the values of honesty and respect for cultural heritage.	Students shared their cultural experiences from their respective regions, fostering values of honesty and appreciation for cultural heritage.
		Reflection with teachers on cultural works can foster moral awareness and noble character.	The teacher facilitated reflections that reinforced moral awareness and intercultural respect.
2.	Global Diversity	Listening to the teacher's explanation about the cultural diversity of South Sulawesi	Students understood differences and appreciated diversity through discussions on local cultures.
		Watching a presentation on traditional Indonesian weaving.	Students explored the richness of Indonesia's cultural heritage through visualizations and discussions on the values of cultural preservation.

CONTEXTUALIZATION STAGE

No	Character Values	Activity	Activity description
3.	Cooperate	Group discussions highlighted key aspects of cultural preservation.	Students collaborated to create cultural notes, sharing roles and responsibilities.
		Make a poster inviting people to preserve culture in groups.	Students produced collaborative works that fostered the spirit of cooperation.
4.	Creative	Create a story about the cultural experiences of your area of origin	Students wrote cultural stories based on their personal experiences, in an original style.
		Making typical Indonesian woven crafts	Students expressed their creativity through artworks representing regional cultural traditions.

At the contextualization stage, project activities demonstrated how culture-based learning can effectively foster students' character development. Based on field observations, the teacher did not merely explain cultural diversity; they created learning experiences that allowed students to engage directly with the values being taught. For instance, when students shared their cultural experiences from their respective regions, they not only practiced public speaking but also cultivated honesty, mutual respect, and pride in their local cultural identities. This activity reinforced the sub-element of ethical behavior toward others, namely appreciating differences and maintaining harmonious social relationships. During the activity of creating posters promoting cultural preservation and traditional Indonesian weaving, observations indicated a high level of student collaboration. Students shared tasks—some drawing, some writing slogans, and others preparing materials—thereby fostering the values of cooperation and collaborative communication. This activity reinforced the sub-element "collaboration and communication to achieve common goals," as presented in Table 1.

Moreover, students' creativity was evident in their ability to develop new ideas by integrating local cultural elements into posters and stories. For example, one student incorporated traditional regional music into their work as a form of original personal expression. This demonstrates the connection between project activities and the sub-elements of generating original ideas and producing tangible works reflecting cultural identity. Thus, the narrative of the results goes beyond merely explaining the contents of the table; it enriches the meaning with empirical context from observations and interviews, illustrating the tangible link between project activities and the reinforcement of character values aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile.

3.3 Implementation of character values through project activities: action stage

The action stage represents the core of the project implementation, where students begin to apply the knowledge, skills, and character values acquired in the previous stages into concrete actions. At this Phase, students are encouraged to actively participate in various activities that require cooperation, creativity, and responsibility, both individually and in groups. The implementation of character values during the action stage is reflected in how students solve problems, make decisions, and demonstrate discipline, empathy, and care for the environment or community. This process not only tests conceptual understanding but also fosters direct experiences that strengthen sustainable character development.

Based on observations and interviews, the action stage demonstrated a strong connection between learning activities and the reinforcement of character sub-elements within the Pancasila Student Profile. During group prayer and the formulation of activity agreements, students actively participated, demonstrating respect and discipline. Field observations indicated that most students reminded each other to adhere to the established agreements. This aligns with the sub-element

[e-**ISSN 2598-5949** | p-**ISSN 2303-1514**]

Page 1073

"prioritizing commonalities with others and respecting differences" within the dimension of faith in God Almighty and noble character. The teacher also emphasized the importance of equal participation within groups so that all students felt valued.

Global diversity values were reflected in students' enthusiasm for selecting and performing songs and dances from various regions. According to interviews, the teacher stated, "The children were very enthusiastic when learning dances from other regions; they even practiced imitating the movements very seriously." This activity reinforced the sub-element "exploring culture and cultural identity," as students not only learned about other cultures but also internalized a sense of pride in diversity. Furthermore, the use of traditional attire in performances demonstrated both pride in one's own cultural identity and appreciation for other cultures. The value of cooperation was prominently observed during group discussions and rehearsal sessions. Observations revealed that each group had clearly assigned responsibilities; for example, some students were responsible for preparing music, others for making props, and others for coordinating practice. This process illustrates the sub-element "collaboration and communication to achieve common goals," as students learned to coordinate, support one another, and respect each member's role.

Table 4. Character values emerging in the action stage

ACTION STAGE

No	Character Values	Activity	Activity description
1.	Believing in and Piety to the Almighty God, as well as Noble Morals	Group prayer and formulation of activity agreements.	Students began the activities with a group prayer and the establishment of group rules to foster discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect.
2.	Global Diversity	Selection and performance of regional songs and dances.	Students searched for, selected, and performed regional songs and dances while wearing traditional attire as a form of appreciation for the nation's cultural diversity.
3.	Cooperate	Group discussions and rehearsals.	Students collaborated to select songs and dances, practiced in groups, provided feedback to one another, and performed their works in turns.
4.	Creative	Generation of ideas and use of artistic props.	Students developed performance ideas, incorporating props, costumes, and variations in movement or music based on their group's characteristics.

Meanwhile, creativity was evident in students' efforts to develop unique performance ideas aligned with their group's character. Some students, for instance, incorporated simple musical instruments such as wooden clappers and plastic bottles to add traditional nuances. This demonstrates the sub-element "producing original ideas and works," as students not only imitated but also innovated based on their own exploration. Overall, the action stage served not only as a space for students to actualize their artistic abilities but also as a tangible platform for character development. The activities reflected a synergy between values of faith, global diversity, cooperation, and creativity. The collaborative process between teachers and students during project implementation fostered a participatory, reflective learning environment, ensuring that the values of the Pancasila student profile were genuinely realized through meaningful activities in the primary school context.

3.4 Implementation of character values through project activities: reflection and follow-up stage

The reflection and follow-up stage concludes the project activities and plays a crucial role in reinforcing students' understanding and internalization of character values. At this stage, students are invited to review the entire process they have undergone, evaluate their successes and challenges, and identify valuable lessons to apply in the future. Reflection provides a means for students to connect their learning experiences with the development of their attitudes and behaviors, while follow-up activities ensure the sustainability of character value implementation in daily life. Through this process, learning does not end with the project activities alone but continues to leave a lasting impact that positively contributes to shaping the Pancasila student profile.

Table 5. Character values emerging in the reflection and follow-up stage

LEVEL OF REFLECTION AND FURTHER ACTION

No	Character Values	Activity	Activity description
1.	Believing in and Piety to the Almighty God as well as Noble Morals	Self-reflection after the art performance.	Students wrote and shared their experiences during the project, reflected on their feelings, and connected them to the values of gratitude and responsibility toward the diversity of God's creation.
2.	Global Diversity	Reflective discussion on cultural diversity.	Students discussed differences in songs, attire, and dances from various regions to understand the importance of respecting cultural identities.
3.	Cooperate	Group evaluation of project implementation.	Students collaborated to review the outcomes of the action stage, identify strengths and weaknesses, and jointly design improvements for future activities.
4.	Creative	Ideas for developing art activities.	Students designed new ideas to improve or expand their artistic works, such as variations in songs, movements, or more appealing costumes.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the reflection and follow-up stage served as an important moment for students to develop self-awareness and strengthen the character values they had learned. The self-reflection activity conducted after the art performance demonstrated the emergence of values of faith, piety to God Almighty, and noble character, particularly in self-awareness and honesty. Students expressed gratitude for their group's achievements and showed a willingness to improve their performance in future activities. This aligns with the sub-element "prioritizing equality with others and respecting differences," as students showed empathy toward their peers' feelings and appreciated each member's contribution during the reflection. During the reflective discussion on cultural diversity, students enthusiastically shared their experiences of learning songs and dances from different regions. One student stated, "I am happy because I got to learn a dance from another region; the movements are different, but all of them are beautiful" (Interview, May 24, 2025). This statement illustrates an understanding of the sub-element "exploring culture and cultural identity" under the dimension of global diversity, as students learned to appreciate cultural differences positively and inclusively.

The value of collaboration and cooperation was evident during students' group evaluations of the project's implementation. Observations revealed that they engaged in open discussions,

communicated their opinions respectfully, and sought joint solutions to improve coordination during rehearsals. This process reflects the sub-element "collaboration and communication to achieve common goals," as students not only evaluated results but also reinforced solidarity and positive interdependence among group members. Meanwhile, the creative dimension was demonstrated when students were asked to propose ideas for developing future art activities. Several groups suggested incorporating local traditional instruments or creating stage props from recycled materials. These ideas reflected students' innovative and imaginative thinking, in line with the sub-element "producing original ideas." Rather than simply repeating previous activities, students strived to create new, more engaging, and contextually relevant works.

Overall, the reflection and follow-up stage functioned as an evaluative and transformative space that strengthened the integration of students' spiritual, social, and creative dimensions. The activities not only deepened character values but also instilled the understanding that every learning experience carries moral and social meaning applicable to real life. Thus, this project served as a sustainable character-building process, fostering gratitude, empathy, collaboration, and creativity among students, thereby serving as a tangible manifestation of the Pancasila Student Profile in elementary education.

Figure 2. Implementation of project activities up to the presentation of works in the form of archipelago dances

The implementation of character values through the presentation of traditional archipelago dance performances, as part of the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) themed Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, serves as the culmination of project-based learning that integrates regional dance arts as a medium to foster awareness of diversity, nationalism, and social skills. Students not only learn the movements, costumes, and accompanying music but also understand the cultural

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[e-**ISSN 2598-5949** | p-**ISSN 2303-1514**]
Page 1076

meanings embedded within them. The value of global diversity is reflected in the appreciation of cultural variety; cooperation is demonstrated through collaborative preparation and rehearsals; creativity is expressed in choreography and stage design; and faith and devotion are evident in respectful behavior and collective prayers. The dances presented by phase C students (grades 5 and 6) include the Batak Toba/Tor-Tor Dance (North Sumatra), Sajojo Dance (Papua), Dayak Dance (Kalimantan), To'Manglaa Dance (South Sulawesi), and Javanese Creative Dance (Java). This activity serves as a contextual learning experience that strengthens national identity, tolerance, and pride in cultural heritage, making the archipelago's dance performances not only a form of entertainment but also an effective educational medium for instilling character values aligned with the spirit of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.

The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project with the theme Bhinneka Tunggal Ika was not without challenges for both teachers and students. One of the main difficulties was time management, as the project activities had to be carried out alongside extracurricular learning, often creating scheduling constraints. In addition, supporting facilities such as costumes and performance equipment also posed obstacles that required practical solutions. Nevertheless, this study revealed an interesting finding, namely, the emergence of positive synergy among teachers, students, and parents. Teachers demonstrated creativity by arranging more flexible schedules and integrating digital media to enhance students' understanding.

Meanwhile, parents actively contributed by providing simple costumes so that children could still perform optimally during the showcase. This condition highlights that, despite technical and managerial challenges, collaboration among stakeholders ensured the smooth implementation of the project while simultaneously strengthening the involvement of the entire educational ecosystem. This point was reinforced by interview data with teachers, who noted:

"The main challenge we experienced was time management. Because the project had to run alongside intracurricular learning, both students and teachers sometimes felt the time was limited. Another issue was the availability of facilities, including the preparation of costumes and props for the performance. However, we sought solutions by scheduling activities more flexibly, including outside regular learning hours. For the facilities, we relied on teachers' creativity and strong parental support to prepare costumes for the showcase. Even though they were simple, the students could still perform at their best." (Interview, May 31, 2025).

Based on these findings, it can be understood that the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, with the theme Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, for Phase C students, not only fostered character values aligned with the targeted dimensions but also reflected the dynamic nature of its classroom practice. The main challenges of limited time and resources, in fact, encouraged the emergence of creative solutions through more flexible scheduling and the active involvement of parents and teachers. This demonstrates that the success of the project is not solely determined by the availability of complete facilities, but also by the collaboration, creativity, and supportive learning environment built within primary schools.

4. Discussion

The implementation of the Pancasila student profile strengthening project for Phase C students indicated an improvement in both awareness and practice of character values in accordance with the program's objectives, namely developing students who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty with noble character, demonstrate global diversity awareness, practice cooperation (*gotong royong*), and exhibit creativity. Project-based activities, which positioned students as active participants in the learning process, promoted their engagement and emotional involvement throughout each stage.

Overall, these findings are consistent with Nurul Fadhilah Rasworo's study, which emphasizes that the Pancasila student profile is an effective strategy for developing students' character through careful planning and structured implementation (Rasworo & Ramadan, 2024). Similarly, Anggreyni and Jewarut stated that the Pancasila student profile strengthening project instills character values from an early age through meaningful and interactive activities (Anggreyni & Jewarut, 2025).

However, this study also revealed several unique findings that distinguish it from previous research. For instance, the character values of faith and devotion to God Almighty were cultivated not only through self-reflection and group prayers but also through integrating local culture into religious practices, such as appreciating the diversity of regional songs and traditional dances as part of God's creation. This indicates that the development of spiritual values in Phase C students was not merely theoretical internalization but was shaped by concrete experiences relevant to their daily lives—global diversity values were developed through collaborative activities that required interaction among students from different backgrounds. Field findings showed that some students were initially hesitant to interact, but gradual experiences through games, group discussions, and cultural presentations successfully fostered mutual respect and tolerance. This demonstrates that character values are shaped through repeated social experiences and reflection on fundamental interactions, aligning with Lickona's theory while reflecting the unique local context of SD Negeri 100 Dare Bunga-Bungae (Tanaka et al., 2023).

The value of cooperation was clearly demonstrated when students worked in groups, divided tasks, and shared collective responsibilities. Interestingly, some students voluntarily assumed leadership roles in discussions or as group coordinators, indicating that leadership and responsibility developed alongside collaborative values. This finding differs from previous studies, which primarily emphasized simple cooperation (Anggraini et al., 2024; Dwi Rahma Putri et al., 2022). Creative activities that required innovative ideas, such as designing products, creating presentations, or performing artistic shows, encouraged students to develop critical and creative thinking skills. A unique finding of this study was that some students utilized digital media, such as cultural videos, to enrich their work despite limited physical resources. This indicates that students' creativity can be optimally developed through adaptation to resource constraints, rather than merely following standard activities. These findings align with Trilling and Fadel's concept of the importance of 21st-century skills in elementary education (Hamzah et al., 2023).

Challenges encountered in implementing the Pancasila student profile strengthening project included limited facilities and time management, particularly in providing costumes and cultural props and in allocating time for character exploration. These findings underscore the importance of an educational ecosystem that fosters active collaboration among teachers, students, and parents to overcome such constraints. For instance, parental involvement in providing costumes and presentation materials emerged as a unique strategy supporting the project's success. This indicates that character development depends not only on teachers' strategy but also on the integration of resources, family participation, and the use of technology. Consequently, the study demonstrates that, despite technical and managerial challenges, the Pancasila student profile strengthening project can succeed through synergy within the school ecosystem. Character values are thus cultivated not only through structured activities but also through contextual experiences, reflection, and meaningful social interactions. These outcomes suggest that the Pancasila student profile strengthening project can serve as a holistic, adaptive, and locally relevant model for character education.

Overall, the implementation of character values through the Pancasila student profile strengthening project in Phase C had a positive impact on shaping student profiles aligned with the Merdeka Belajar vision. The success of the project requires program continuity, competent teacher support, parental involvement, and adaptation to field constraints. With a holistic approach, the Pancasila student profile strengthening project is not merely a temporary program but becomes an

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[e-**ISSN 2598-5949** | p-**ISSN 2303-1514**]

Page 1078

integral part of a sustainable school culture, preparing an adaptive, creative, and strong-character generation capable of facing global challenges.

5.   Conclusion and Implications

The implementation of character values through the Pancasila student profile strengthening project for Phase C students, with the theme Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, has proven to be an effective strategy for fostering competencies and positive attitudes relevant to 21st-century demands. Through the stages of introduction, contextualization, action, reflection, and follow-up, students not only understood character values such as faith and devotion to God Almighty, noble character, global diversity awareness, cooperation, and creativity, but also internalized these values in their daily behavior. Project-based activities that position students as the primary agents of learning promoted active participation, emotional engagement, and awareness of social responsibility, enabling the natural and meaningful internalization of character values.

The findings indicate that the project's success depended not only on structured activity design but also on the teacher's creativity in facilitating the learning process, adequate support in terms of facilities, and active parental involvement, such as providing costumes and stage materials. Through direct, contextual experiences, students learned to collaborate, appreciate differences, manage conflicts, and express their creativity in tangible actions, allowing Pancasila values to be internalized sustainably.

The implications of this study suggest that schools should design project modules based on real, contextual experiences, ensure sufficient activity duration, provide supporting facilities, and leverage teacher creativity and parental involvement. Educators act as facilitators, connecting project activities to students' real-life experiences and ensuring that Pancasila values are applied naturally both in and out of the classroom. With consistent implementation, such projects have the potential to cultivate a generation that is not only academically competent but also morally upright, socially empathetic, and capable of contributing to building a civilized and competitive society in the global era.

Moreover, this study opens opportunities for further research on the long-term impact of strengthening projects on students' character, behavior, and attitudes beyond school, including their relationships with academic achievement and social participation. Future studies could explore variations in methods, media, and project stages, including the integration of deep learning and the use of digital technology, to examine their effects on character value internalization. Subsequent research may also develop flexible, context-specific project modules that can be implemented across elementary schools, taking into account local characteristics and cultures, and investigate the effectiveness of teacher training in facilitating character projects to enhance implementation success. Thus, future research is expected to contribute to the development of a more systematic, contextual, and sustainable character education strategy, making the Pancasila student profile strengthening project an integral part of school culture capable of preparing an adaptive, creative, and strong-character generation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Declaration

All participants provided informed consent before their involvement in the study. They were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

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Page 1082