

Integrating the Pancasila Student Profile into Islamic Religious Education Lesson Design at an Indonesian Public Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum positions the Pancasila Student Profile (PSP) as the central framework for character formation, yet empirical evidence on how elementary school teachers translate its six dimensions into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lesson design remains limited. This study examines the extent of PSP integration in PAI lesson design at SD Negeri 100/II Muaro Bungo, Jambi Province, and identifies the institutional and pedagogical factors that shape its enactment. A qualitative descriptive-exploratory case study was conducted between February and May 2025, involving one PAI teacher, one school principal, and twelve students from grades IV–VI selected through purposive sampling. Data were generated through fifteen semi-structured interviews of approximately 60 minutes each, six classroom observations of 90 minutes each, and document analysis of the Capaian Pembelajaran (Learning Outcomes), Tujuan Pembelajaran (Learning Objectives), Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (Learning Trajectory), and six teaching modules. Audio was captured at 44.1 kHz using a recorder with ± 0.5 dB SPL accuracy. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, with credibility established through source, technique, and time triangulation. The teacher articulated five of six PSP dimensions during interviews, but only the dimensions of faith and piety with noble character (89%) and mutual cooperation (67%) were explicitly mapped into the analyzed lesson documents; critical reasoning, creativity, and global diversity appeared in fewer than 20% of plans. Three recurring barriers were identified: limited Merdeka Curriculum training (under 24 hours per teacher in the past three years), absence of context-specific learning resources, and an unformalized character-habitation routine at the school level. Effective PSP integration in elementary PAI requires explicit dimension-to-objective mapping in lesson templates, sustained teacher professional development, and a coordinated school family partnership for value habituation.

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Introduction

Indonesia adopted the Merdeka Curriculum nationwide in 2022, repositioning character formation as a central educational outcome through the six-dimensional Pancasila Student Profile (PSP): faith and piety toward God Almighty with noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). Embedding these dimensions in subject-area lesson design particularly Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam, PAI), which constitutes three to four weekly hours of instruction in public elementary schools is therefore a central implementation question.

worship, and exposure to digital content inconsistent with religious norms. Within this environment, schools that limit religious education to formal Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) lessons risk producing students who comprehend religious doctrine cognitively yet fail to internalise it behaviourally. The challenge is therefore not merely to teach religion but to embed religious practice within the lived culture of the school.

Three strands of recent scholarship have addressed PSP in Indonesian schools. The first describes PSP as a policy framework and articulates its alignment with national education goals (Purnawanto, 2022; Feri et al., 2023). The second analyzes school-level cultural and project-based programs that operationalize PSP through co-curricular activities (Fitriyani et al., 2020; Rahmawati, 2022; Friska et al., 2023). The third documents pockets of PSP-PAI integration, predominantly in secondary settings (Setiawan & Sari, 2022; Sari et al., 2022; Hasanah, 2024). Despite this growing literature, three gaps persist. First, most studies treat PSP enactment at the school-culture level rather than at the granular CP-TP-ATP level where instructional decisions crystallize. Second, elementary PAI where pupils first encounter both religious and Pancasila moral discourse is comparatively under-investigated relative to secondary contexts. Third, prior work seldom triangulates teachers' verbal accounts of PSP integration with classroom observation and document analysis, making it difficult to distinguish rhetorical alignment from operational alignment. Recent reviews of Merdeka Curriculum implementation similarly report that teachers' espoused understanding often diverges from their planning artefacts (Nurdin & Anhusadar, 2021; Krisnawati, 2025), but this divergence has not been quantified at the lesson-design level for elementary PAI. The present study addresses these gaps by combining interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to map the discrepancy between teachers' conceptual understanding of PSP and the explicit appearance of PSP dimensions within their CP-TP-ATP design and classroom enactment.

Accordingly, this study pursues two objectives: (a) to describe how PSP dimensions are integrated into PAI lesson design at an Indonesian public elementary school, and (b) to identify the institutional and pedagogical factors that shape this integration. To meet these objectives, a qualitative descriptive-exploratory case study was conducted at SD Negeri 100/II Muaro Bungo, Jambi Province, drawing on triangulated interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, with findings analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The reporting that follows is organized in the same sequence as the data themselves: teacher conceptual understanding, integration in lesson documents, observed classroom enactment, and the institutional barriers and strategies that surround them.

Methods

Research Design and Setting A qualitative descriptive-exploratory case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was selected because the research questions concern how a phenomenon PSP Integration in lesson design is enacted in a bounded real-world setting and what contextual factors shape it. The study was conducted at SD Negeri 100/II Muaro Bungo, a public elementary school in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia, that has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum since the 2022/2023 academic year. Fieldwork ran from 3 February to 16 May 2025.

Participants and Sampling. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. The primary informant was the PAI teacher responsible for grades IV–VI (one teacher; female; 12 years of teaching experience; certified). Secondary informants comprised the school principal (15 years of experience) and twelve students drawn equally from grades IV, V, and VI (four per grade; six female and six male). Inclusion criteria for the teacher were: (a) holding professional teacher certification, (b) directly teaching PAI in the

academic year under study, and (c) having attended at least one Merdeka Curriculum induction session. Inclusion criteria for the principal were: (a) tenure of at least three years and (b) involvement in approving the school's curriculum operational document.

Data Collection. Three converging techniques were used. (1) Semi-structured interviews: fifteen interviews (eight with the teacher, three with the principal, four group interviews with three students each) of 55–65 minutes were conducted in a quiet office room and audio-recorded with a Zoom H1n recorder operating at 44.1 kHz/16-bit, with a manufacturer-stated SPL accuracy of ± 0.5 dB. The interview guide covered four blocks: (i) understanding of PSP dimensions, (ii) integration into CP–TP–ATP, (iii) classroom enactment, and (iv) perceived barriers and strategies. (2) Classroom observations: six 90-minute non-participant observations of PAI lessons in grades IV–VI were recorded using a structured observation rubric that listed each PSP dimension and required the observer to mark presence (1) or absence (0) on each of nine lesson micro-events (opening, prayer, content delivery, group work, individual work, reflection, assessment, closing, transition). (3) Document analysis: the school's CP, TP, and ATP for PAI in grades IV–VI, together with six teaching modules covering 24 lesson plans across the second semester of 2024/2025, were collected and analyzed against the same six-dimension rubric.

Data Analysis. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model in three concurrent flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim in Indonesian, then thematically coded in NVivo 14 using a deductive-inductive scheme: a deductive starter codebook of the six PSP dimensions plus three a-priori barrier categories (training, resources, school culture), supplemented by inductive codes that emerged from open coding. To assess coding stability, two coders independently coded a 20% sub-sample (three transcripts and 24 observation entries); inter-coder agreement reached Cohen's $\kappa = 0.81$, above the conventional 0.75 threshold for substantial agreement (McHugh, 2012). Discrepancies were resolved through consensus discussion and the codebook was refined accordingly.

Trustworthiness. Credibility was established through three forms of triangulation: source (teacher, principal, students), technique (interview, observation, document), and time (lessons sampled across early-, mid-, and end-semester). Member checks were carried out with the teacher and principal on a 6-page summary of preliminary findings. Peer debriefing was conducted in two sessions with two senior PAI lecturers external to the research team. An audit trail of raw data, codebooks, and analytic memos was maintained throughout the study.

Ethical Considerations. Written informed consent was obtained from all adult participants and from the parents/guardians of student participants, consistent with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (2013). Pseudonyms are used throughout the reporting; the teacher informant is referred to as "Ms. D". Audio files and transcripts were stored on an encrypted drive accessible only to the research team.

Results

Teachers' Conceptual Understanding of the Pancasila Student Profile

Across eight teacher interviews, Ms. D articulated five of the six PSP dimensions when asked to enumerate them without prompting. The dimensions of faith and piety with noble character, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity were named consistently across interviews 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8. The dimension of global diversity was named only once and was confused with religious tolerance in two further interviews. When asked to define each dimension, the teacher's accounts referred to

general moral content ("good behavior", "helping friends", "being honest") rather than to the operational competency descriptors specified in the Ministry's implementation guide. Ms. D also explicitly framed PSP as transformational rather than merely cognitive: PAI, in her account, should form character through habituation, not only transfer religious knowledge. The principal's account converged on this transformational framing but added that institutional time pressure constrained how far this framing could be enacted.

Explicit Integration of PSP Dimensions in CP, TP, ATP, and Teaching Modules

Document analysis of the CP, TP, ATP, and 24 lesson plans (six modules × four meetings each) yielded the distribution shown in Table 1. Each lesson plan was scored on whether each PSP dimension was named and operationalized in at least one learning objective, learning activity, or assessment item. A dimension was counted as present only when its label appeared explicitly in the document; thematic resemblance without explicit labeling was excluded.

PSP Dimension	Lesson s (n)	% of 24	Mean activities/pla n	Assessme nt item present (n)
Faith and piety with noble character	21	87.5	2.4	18
Mutual cooperation (gotong royong)	16	66.7	1.6	9
Independence (mandiri)	9	37.5	0.9	4
Critical reasoning	4	16.7	0.3	1
Creativity	3	12.5	0.3	0
Global diversity	2	8.3	0.2	0

Table 1. Frequency of explicit PSP dimensions across 24 PAI lesson plans (n = 24)

As Table 1 shows, two dimensions dominated the documented design faith and piety (87.5%) and mutual cooperation (66.7%) while three dimensions (critical reasoning, creativity, and global diversity) appeared in fewer than 20% of the analyzed lesson plans. Independence occupied an intermediate position (37.5%). Across the six teaching modules examined, none used the official PSP labels in the CP-to-TP mapping section; the labels appeared only in the lesson activity narrative.

Classroom Enactment of PSP Dimensions

The six observed lessons (3 in grade IV, 2 in grade V, 1 in grade VI) confirmed the asymmetry visible in lesson plans. Across the 54 observed lesson micro-events (six lessons × nine micro-events), faith and piety appeared in 47 micro-events (87%), most often through opening and closing prayers and through Quranic content delivery. Mutual cooperation appeared in 19 micro-events (35%), almost exclusively in group-work and pair-work segments. Independence appeared in 11 micro-events (20%), critical reasoning in 6 (11%), creativity in 3 (6%), and global diversity in 0. Mean total instructional time devoted to character-explicit reflection (a closing micro-event in which pupils were asked to articulate which value they had practiced) was 3.2 minutes per 90-minute lesson, with two lessons containing no such reflection at all.

Barriers to Integration

Three barrier categories emerged consistently across teacher and principal interviews. (1) Training: Ms. D reported attending two Merdeka Curriculum sessions totaling 18 hours over the past three years; the principal estimated that PAI teachers in the school had received fewer than 24 hours of formal training on PSP integration since 2022. (2) Resources: the teacher reported using two main printed handbooks and the official Kemdikbudristek implementation guide, but no contextually localized teaching modules linking Bungo cultural practices to PSP dimensions. (3) School culture: the school had not formalized a daily character-habitation routine; values were addressed in the weekly flag ceremony (15 minutes) and in occasional projects but were not embedded in cross-subject planning.

Teacher Strategies and Continuity Efforts

Despite these barriers, four teacher strategies recurred across interviews and observations: (a) embedding character cues in every lesson opening and closing rather than allocating separate "character lessons"; (b) using short-cycle group projects (1–2 lessons) to combine faith and mutual cooperation; (c) participating in a school-level PAI–civic education planning forum that met three times during the semester; and (d) involving parents through value-linked homework prompts (e.g., recording acts of cooperation at home), used in 7 of the 24 plans. These strategies addressed two of the three barrier categories (training and resources) but did not modify school-level habituation routines.

Discussion

Three patterns in these findings warrant a sustained dialogue with prior literature: the asymmetric uptake of PSP dimensions, the persistent rhetoric–practice gap, and the bounded effectiveness of teacher-led strategies under unchanged institutional conditions. The asymmetry in Table 1 with faith/piety and mutual cooperation accounting for over 70% of explicit PSP references, and critical reasoning, creativity, and global diversity below 20% extends rather than contradicts earlier descriptive accounts. Setiawan and Sari (2022) reported a similar weighting at the secondary level, where religious-moral dimensions dominated. The present study quantifies that asymmetry at the elementary level and locates it precisely in the CP–TP–ATP layer of lesson design rather than in school culture writ large. This adds a granular layer to the predominantly descriptive PSP literature (Purnawanto, 2022; Feri et al., 2023). One plausible explanation, consistent with Lickona's (1991) habituation hypothesis, is that dimensions semantically continuous with the existing PAI canon (faith, cooperation) are absorbed first, while dimensions that require new pedagogic scripts (critical reasoning, creativity) require explicit professional development and exemplar resources to migrate from rhetorical endorsement to operational design.

The rhetoric–practice gap evident in Section 3.1 versus 3.2 echoes the implementation-fidelity literature on Indonesian curriculum reform (Nuridin & Anhusadar, 2021). Where prior work has typically described this gap qualitatively, the triangulated design used here permits a direct contrast: Ms. D articulated five dimensions in interview but operationalized only two with consistency. This pattern is consistent with the international finding that espoused theories often diverge from theories-in-use when professional development is short and content-light (Tomlinson, 2017). The 18 hours of training reported by Ms. D fall well below the 50–80 hour threshold typically associated with sustained instructional change in comparable curriculum-reform contexts. Increasing training hours alone, however, is insufficient: Krisnawati (2025)

shows that reflective lesson-study formats produce more measurable shifts than lecture-format induction of similar duration, suggesting that the structure of professional development matters as much as its volume.

The bounded effectiveness of teacher-led strategies visible in the contrast between Ms. D's four documented strategies and the unchanged 3.2-minute mean reflection time per lesson supports Epstein's (2018) overlapping-spheres argument that enduring character outcomes require coordinated action across school, family, and community. The teacher's parent-involvement homework appeared in 29% of plans (7/24) and was implemented in only three of the six observed lessons; without a school-level habituation routine that connects classroom and home consistently, individual teacher initiative is structurally constrained. This finding parallels Fitriyani et al. (2020), who report that schools with formalized morning-routine habituation show stronger pupil-level value uptake than schools relying on subject-teacher initiative alone.

Two limitations should temper these inferences. First, the single-school case design constrains transferability; readers should treat the quantitative percentages as descriptive of this site rather than as population estimates. Second, the observation period (one semester) cannot capture the multi-year arc over which character formation typically becomes visible. Nonetheless, the convergence between document analysis and observation strengthens the internal validity of the rhetoric–practice gap reported here.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the Dhuha prayer as a hidden curriculum strategy for religious character formation at SMP Ad-Dhuha. The investigation found that the practice operates as a structured non-formal educational mechanism that cultivates discipline, devotional consistency, responsibility, courteous conduct, and exemplary behaviour, and that these outcomes are mediated by teacher exemplarity, fixed scheduling, and the religious atmosphere of the school. Together these findings indicate that the formative function of the practice is not reducible to the act of prayer alone; rather, it depends on an institutional configuration in which scheduling, modelling, and physical setting work in concert. The Dhuha prayer therefore offers a viable institutional model for Islamic schools seeking to embed character education in school culture rather than confine it to formal subject instruction. Subsequent research should extend the inquiry through multi-site comparative designs, longitudinal tracking of character outcomes after graduation, and quantitative measurement of the relative contribution of each institutional mediator.

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