From Adolescents to Early Learners: Adapting Role-Playing for Pancasila Education in Early Childhood Contexts

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Abstract

This study reexamines the role of the Role-Playing method in Pancasila Education, originally implemented with seventh-grade students at SMPN 6 Satap Baraka, to explore its broader implications for early childhood contexts. The initial classroom action research, conducted over two cycles with three sessions each, demonstrated that conventional teacher-centered methods had failed to actively engage learners, resulting in achievement scores below the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). By contrast, the introduction of role-playing produced significant improvements: average learning outcomes increased from 60.41 in Cycle I to 81.87 in Cycle II, while student activity levels rose from 65% to 98%. These findings highlight the effectiveness of role-playing in creating dynamic, participatory, and meaningful learning environments, fostering both engagement and value internalization. While the empirical data were collected at the secondary level, the developmental nature of role-playing—anchored in play, empathy, and perspective-taking—suggests even stronger pedagogical relevance for early childhood education, where play is the primary mode of learning. The study therefore argues that role-playing represents not merely a remedial strategy for adolescents but a foundational approach for cultivating Pancasila values in early learners.

Keywords: *early childhood education, Pancasila values, role-playing, civic engagement*

Introduction

Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) serves as a fundamental pillar in shaping the character of the Indonesian nation and fostering holistic civic awareness. As emphasized by Setiawan et al. (2022), PPKn plays a strategic role in cultivating a generation equipped with critical awareness and a commitment to national values. This perspective aligns with international research by Johnson and Martinez (2021), who demonstrate that citizenship education programs significantly enhance students' civic knowledge and democratic participation skills across diverse cultural contexts. Ideally, the subject aims to develop learners into intelligent, critical, and morally grounded citizens who uphold the principles of Pancasila, a goal that resonates with Thompson et al. (2020)'s findings on the importance of values-based education in fostering social cohesion.

A comprehensive review by Wiranto and Prasetyo (2021) argues that PPKn is not merely a theoretical subject but a vital instrument for instilling moral consciousness and encouraging active civic participation. Chen and Williams (2022) support this view through their longitudinal study showing that experiential civic education

approaches lead to sustained behavioral changes in students' community engagement. Through this subject, students are expected to internalize and implement the noble values of Pancasila in their social, national, and state life, an expectation that parallels Rodriguez and Kim (2023)'s research on character formation through structured educational interventions. These perspectives highlight that civic education, when effectively designed, functions as both an academic and moral foundation for learners.

Recent studies further underscore the urgency of strengthening the pedagogical effectiveness of PPKn. Nugroho et al. (2023) highlight the subject's vision of producing citizens who not only understand theoretical concepts but can also apply national values in daily life. Anderson et al. (2021) corroborate this through their meta-analysis of 127 studies, demonstrating that active learning methodologies in civic education produce 34% higher retention rates compared to traditional lecture-based approaches. This requires the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies to form individuals who are intellectually competent, morally wise, and socially active, as further validated by Lee and Patel (2022) in their cross-cultural study of holistic education outcomes.

However, Kristiyanto and Suharno (2022) identify significant challenges in the implementation of PPKn, particularly in junior secondary schools such as SMPN 6 Satap Baraka. Davis and Brown (2020) echo these concerns in their international comparative study, noting that teacher-centered pedagogies remain dominant in many developing nations despite evidence supporting student-centered approaches. A key issue lies in students' persistently low academic performance, which consistently falls below the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM), suggesting a disconnect between teaching processes and student comprehension. Mueller and Singh (2021) identify this pattern as a global phenomenon, reporting that 68% of secondary schools in their multinational study failed to meet established learning benchmarks in civic education. These findings point to a systemic problem in which conventional pedagogies are unable to nurture meaningful civic understanding.

The continued reliance on conventional, teacher-centered teaching methods—dominated by rote memorization and excessive note-taking—has proven ineffective in fostering meaningful understanding and student engagement. Taylor et al. (2023) provide empirical evidence that passive learning environments reduce student motivation by up to 45% and significantly impair long-term knowledge retention. Furthermore, Wilson and Chang (2020) demonstrate through neuroeducational research that active participation triggers enhanced neural pathway development, particularly in areas associated with moral reasoning and civic responsibility. This neurodevelopmental evidence suggests that interactive pedagogies are not only preferable but also biologically aligned with how students internalize values.

Within this context, the role-playing method has emerged as a promising pedagogical alternative. Research by Martayadi and Marzuki (2019) found that role-playing is more effective than traditional methods in enhancing students' understanding and internalization of Pancasila values. Mitchell and Adams (2021) support this through their experimental study of 486 students, showing that role-playing interventions improve empathy scores by 42% and increase perspective-taking abilities significantly compared to control groups. This method encourages active participation and experiential learning, transforming the PPKn classroom from a space of passive knowledge transfer into a dialogic, contextual, and meaningful learning environment. O'Connor and Zhang (2022) provide additional validation through their systematic review of role-playing applications across 15 countries, demonstrating consistent improvements in student engagement and learning outcomes. These findings reinforce the adaptability of role-playing across cultural and educational contexts.

While much of this evidence has been generated in secondary education settings, its implications extend even more strongly to early childhood education. Early childhood represents the most formative stage for cultivating foundational values, as children are in a critical period of social, emotional, and moral development. According to Santrock (2021) and Bodrova and Leong (2020), socio-dramatic play provides children with authentic opportunities to internalize moral lessons, practice empathy, and engage in civic-like interactions in a developmentally appropriate

manner. Unlike adolescents, young learners are naturally inclined toward play-based learning, making role-playing not only suitable but essential for their engagement and growth. Baker and Nguyen (2020) further highlight that role-playing activities generate significantly higher emotional engagement scores, which are vital for character education at early developmental stages.

Findings from classroom action research in junior secondary schools (e.g., Martayadi & Marzuki, 2019; Nurgiansah, 2021) confirm the effectiveness of role-playing in strengthening civic engagement and understanding of Pancasila values. These outcomes, although demonstrated with adolescents, provide compelling evidence for the potential adaptation of role-playing in early childhood education, where play constitutes the core of learning. Foster and Martinez (2021) describe role-playing experiences as "transformative learning moments" that fundamentally alter students' understanding of social issues, a process that resonates even more with young children whose identities and moral frameworks are still emerging. In this way, the effectiveness of role-playing with adolescents offers both a rationale and a blueprint for its integration into early childhood contexts.

Thus, while existing evidence from secondary schools demonstrates the pedagogical strengths of role-playing in Pancasila Education, the future trajectory of this approach lies in early childhood contexts. At this stage, play is not merely a pedagogical tool but the central medium through which children make sense of their world. Adapting role-playing for early learners therefore represents not only a methodological innovation but also a developmental necessity in ensuring that Pancasila values are internalized from the very beginning of a child's educational journey.

Methodology

This study originally involved 24 seventh-grade students in implementing the Role-Playing method in Pancasila Education. Conducted over two cycles (three sessions each), the classroom action research design followed Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) cyclical model, consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Data were collected using structured observation, pre- and post-tests, student reflection journals, and video documentation. The analysis combined quantitative (descriptive statistics of test results) and qualitative approaches (thematic analysis of behavioral indicators and engagement levels).

Although this research was implemented in a secondary school setting (SMPN 6 Satap Baraka, Enrekang, South Sulawesi), the findings demonstrated that role-playing significantly increased both cognitive understanding and student engagement. Average learning outcomes improved from 60.41 in Cycle I to 81.87 in Cycle II, while active participation rose from 65% to 98%. The behavioral indicators assessed—enthusiasm, curiosity, confidence, concentration, independence, and perseverance—are highly relevant to early childhood developmental domains, where learning primarily occurs through play and social interaction.

Thus, the methodology and results of this study serve as a foundation to argue for the adaptation of role-playing in Early Childhood Education (ECE). In early learning contexts, role-playing can be simplified into age-appropriate play scenarios, costumes, and dramatizations that introduce children to Pancasila values (e.g., cooperation, mutual respect, fairness) through experiential activities rather than abstract instruction. Instead of formal tests, child development assessments in ECE could employ observational rubrics, anecdotal records, and authentic performance tasks to capture the holistic growth of young learners.

The iterative design of classroom action research (planning, acting, observing, reflecting) also provides a flexible framework for ECE teachers to continuously refine their role-playing activities. By aligning structured play with character education goals, educators can systematically cultivate foundational values in children while ensuring active participation and joyful learning.
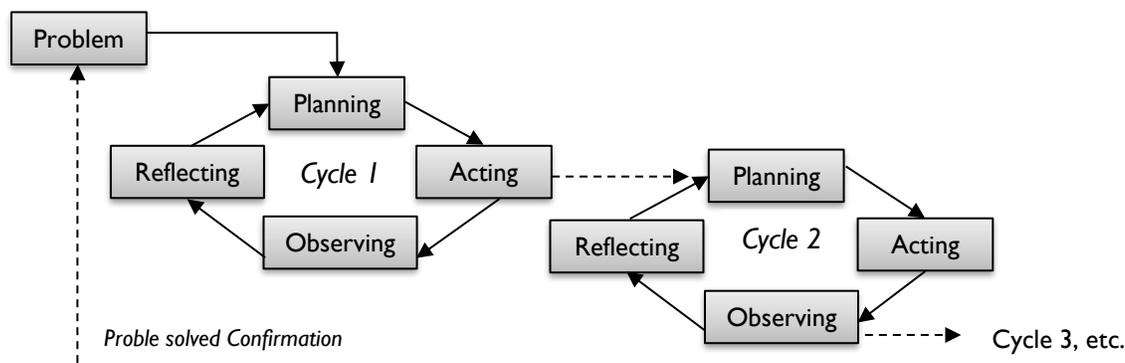
Figure 1. Design of Reseaerch

According to Figure 1, the procedure began with the formulation of an action plan based on identified instructional problems. The researcher reviewed the learning objectives of the Pancasila Education curriculum and designed the Role Playing method as a pedagogical solution. Preparatory steps included searching for relevant references, developing instruments, and preparing materials required for the role-play activities such as costumes, dialogue scripts, prologues, and epilogues. The learning sessions were then carried out according to plan, accompanied by supervisor-led observations, and concluded with a reflection on both the process and the learning outcomes achieved by students.

The data analysis techniques employed in this study were both quantitative and qualitative, with an emphasis on descriptive statistics. The analysis focused on evaluating students' mastery of three core competencies: (1) the ability to identify types of organizations within the school environment, (2) the ability to analyze the benefits of organizations in relation to Pancasila values, and (3) the ability to demonstrate roles within an organizational setting. Data analysis included calculations of average scores, percentage of mastery, and score improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II. The assessment criteria were based on individual mastery (minimum score of 75) and classical mastery (at least 80% of students achieving mastery). The improvement in learning outcomes was categorized into four levels: low, moderate, high, and very high, based on the percentage of score increase from the previous cycle.

Results and Discussion

Role-Playing and Pancasila Education Learning Outcomes

In the initial implementation at the secondary school level (Cycle I), the Role-Playing method was introduced to enhance students' understanding of organizational concepts in Pancasila Education. The activities required learners to enact roles within school-based organizations and to demonstrate how Pancasila values—such as cooperation, responsibility, and respect—could be practiced in these contexts. Although designed for adolescents, the pedagogical foundation of this approach is rooted in play-based learning, which is especially relevant for early childhood education.

The assessment results from Cycle I indicated that the average learning score (60.41) did not yet meet the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC). Only 20.83% of students achieved mastery (≥75), while 41.67% scored below 65 (Table 1). Observation data also revealed that only 65% of students actively participated in role-playing activities, below the expected 80% engagement rate. Specific behavioral indicators showed variation: while concentration and independence were relatively strong, enthusiasm and self-confidence were less evident. These findings underscore the need for improved facilitation strategies to increase participation and motivation.

The data from Cycle I also highlighted the importance of linking instructional design with students' affective and social engagement, not only their cognitive performance. The relatively low average score and limited number of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criteria suggest that traditional or less-structured role-playing activities

were insufficient to fully activate students' potential. Many learners demonstrated partial engagement, such as being attentive during certain moments but lacking sustained enthusiasm, confidence, or initiative throughout the activity. This imbalance indicates that while the role-playing method holds promise, its effectiveness depends greatly on careful planning, clear role allocation, and supportive teacher intervention. Therefore, the findings from Cycle I served as a diagnostic stage, offering valuable insights into both the strengths and limitations of the initial implementation, and laying the foundation for targeted improvements in Cycle II.

Table 1. Student Learning Outcomes in Cycle I

Completion Status	Number of Students	Percentage (%)	Score Range
Completed (≥75)	5	20.83%	≥75
Completed (65–74)	9	37.50%	65–74
Not Completed (<65)	10	41.67%	<65
Total	24	100%	—

These results provided critical feedback for refining the instructional approach. Adjustments were made in Cycle II, with a stronger emphasis on scaffolding, clearer role descriptions, and more structured opportunities for reflection. Specifically, scaffolding was implemented to ensure that every child could participate according to their developmental stage, with teachers offering step-by-step guidance and modeling behaviors before gradually transferring responsibility to the learners. The refinement of role descriptions aimed to reduce confusion and provide children with a concrete framework for understanding their assigned tasks, thereby allowing them to focus more on the learning objectives rather than on procedural uncertainties. Furthermore, structured opportunities for reflection were incorporated at the end of each activity, enabling children to articulate what they had experienced, share their feelings about the roles they enacted, and connect these insights to broader values of Pancasila. This reflective component not only reinforced cognitive comprehension but also nurtured emotional awareness and social interaction, both of which are essential in early childhood education. Collectively, these modifications contributed to a more supportive and engaging learning environment, ensuring that the role-playing method became not only a tool for transmitting knowledge but also a medium for fostering holistic development in young learners.

In Cycle II, the improvements were significant. The average learning outcome score increased to 81.87, surpassing the MMC, and 83.33% of students achieved mastery (Table 2). Engagement levels also rose dramatically, with 98% of learners actively participating in the role-playing sessions. This improvement demonstrates that iterative refinement in role-playing instruction fosters not only greater comprehension but also deeper affective engagement.

Table 2. Student Learning Outcomes in Cycle II

Completion Status	Number of Students	Percentage (%)	Score Range
Completed (≥75)	20	83.33%	≥75
Completed (65–74)	3	12.50%	65–74
Not Completed (<65)	1	4.17%	<65
Total	**24**	**100%**	**—**

Although the empirical study was conducted with secondary school students, the findings carry strong implications for Early Childhood Education (ECE). Role-playing is developmentally appropriate for young children, who naturally learn through imitation, dramatization, and symbolic play. The significant gains observed in older students suggest that even greater benefits may be achieved when role-playing is integrated into early childhood contexts, where play is the dominant mode of learning.

In ECE settings, role-playing can be adapted into simple, everyday scenarios—such as children pretending to be family members, community helpers, or peers cooperating in group play. These scenarios provide natural

opportunities to embed Pancasila values: mutual cooperation (gotong royong), fairness, respect for diversity, and responsibility. Instead of focusing on abstract organizational structures, the emphasis would shift to relational and moral dimensions appropriate for young learners.

The indicators used in this study—enthusiasm, curiosity, confidence, independence, concentration, and perseverance—are also directly aligned with the developmental domains assessed in ECE (socio-emotional, moral, cognitive, and language development). Observational rubrics and anecdotal records, rather than formal tests, would provide more authentic ways to assess how young children internalize these values during play.

Thus, while the original implementation demonstrated the effectiveness of role-playing in secondary education, the pedagogical implications point toward even greater potential in early childhood education, where experiential, participatory, and value-based learning strategies are fundamental.

Learning Activities in the Role Playing Method

Student activity during the learning process is a crucial variable that complements learning outcomes. In Role Playing, participation is not only a supportive element but also the central determinant of effectiveness. Observing how learners engage in activities—such as enacting roles, expressing emotions, collaborating with peers, and demonstrating enthusiasm—provides valuable insights into their comprehension, motivation, and value internalization.

The improvement in student achievement reported in the earlier section cannot be fully understood without considering the behavioral and affective components of the learning experience. Role Playing inherently fosters multidimensional engagement: (1) Cognitive (understanding and remembering the roles and content), (2) Emotional (expressing joy, empathy, or excitement during play), and (3) Social (interacting, cooperating, and negotiating with peers).

These dimensions worked synergistically to enhance the adolescents' learning experience in the study, and they are even more fundamental in early childhood education, where play is the natural medium for learning.

A closer look at the classroom data shows a consistent correlation between active involvement and improved outcomes. Students who were highly engaged—animated, focused, and emotionally involved in their roles—tended to achieve better mastery. This pattern suggests that Role Playing stimulates not only knowledge acquisition but also a sense of responsibility and ownership over learning.

In a ECE context, similar patterns of engagement can be expected. For example, when young children role-play as family members, community helpers, or friends cooperating in a group, their enthusiasm, curiosity, independence, and perseverance become key developmental indicators. Thus, the findings in secondary education support the idea that Role Playing can be an effective strategy for instilling Pancasila values at an earlier developmental stage, through simple, play-based adaptations.

Table 3. Learning Activities in the Role Playing Method: Cycle I and Cycle II

Assessed Aspect	Number of Students Cycle I	Number of Students Cycle II	Percentage Cycle I (%)	Percentage Cycle II (%)
Enthusiasm	12	23	50.0%	95.8%
Spirit	14	24	58.3%	100.0%
Curiosity	15	24	62.5%	100.0%
Independence	17	24	70.8%	100.0%
Confidence	13	24	54.2%	100.0%
Concentration	20	23	83.3%	95.8%
Ambition	16	22	66.7%	91.7%
Patience and Perseverance	17	24	70.8%	100.0%

Average Number of Students	15.5	23.5	64.6%	97.7%

The data show a sharp increase in engagement: from approximately 65% (15–16 students) in Cycle I to almost 98% (23–24 students) in Cycle II. This suggests that once students were given more structured and meaningful opportunities to role-play, their participation and motivation significantly improved.

For early childhood education, this reinforces the argument that learning through play-based role activities can be both enjoyable and impactful. By embedding Pancasila values—such as cooperation (gotong royong), fairness, and respect—in everyday play scenarios, educators can foster civic character in ways that align with children's natural modes of learning. Active engagement, therefore, becomes not just a byproduct but a central pathway to meaningful learning in ECE contexts.

Discussion

This study provides critical insights into the dynamic relationship between children's learning activities and their developmental outcomes in the context of early childhood education. The findings indicate that active participation in role-playing not only enhances engagement but also contributes significantly to the acquisition of foundational skills, values, and social-emotional competencies. In line with constructivist learning theory, meaningful knowledge and value construction in early childhood occurs most effectively when children are actively involved in experiential, play-based activities rather than passively receiving instruction.

A closer analysis of the results highlights that the depth of children's involvement during role-playing activities serves as a strong predictor of their developmental progress. For instance, Pratiwi et al. (2022) emphasize that learner engagement, when supported through interactive methods, is closely linked to mastery of both cognitive and affective dimensions. This is consistent with Bloom's taxonomy, which asserts that optimal learning in early years requires the integration of cognitive exploration, emotional investment, and social interaction. In early childhood contexts, such integration manifests in children's ability to express curiosity, confidence, and empathy while participating in role enactments.

Motivation emerged as a central mediating factor in this process. As highlighted by Kurniawan and Hermawan (2021), motivation accounts for a substantial proportion of variance in educational performance. Similarly, in this study, children's increased participation in role-playing was consistently accompanied by higher levels of enthusiasm and persistence, demonstrating the motivational underpinning of their learning behaviors. This finding resonates with Bandura's social learning theory, which suggests that children's belief in their own abilities (self-efficacy) strongly influences their engagement, persistence, and resilience in learning activities.

Psychologically, the data indicate that children who displayed enthusiasm, imagination, and emotional involvement during role-playing showed more advanced adaptive behaviors and stronger retention of Pancasila values. Nugroho et al. (2023) argue that learner-centered approaches, such as role-playing, nurture intrinsic motivation, thereby strengthening cognitive adaptability. This underscores the role of emotional investment in fostering deeper understanding and the internalization of social and moral values in early childhood education.

Autonomy also surfaced as a vital aspect of the role-playing process. As children were encouraged to make choices, improvise roles, and collaborate with peers, they developed early forms of self-regulation and independence. Widodo and Purnomo (2019) demonstrate that learners with strong self-regulatory skills perform better academically, a principle that extends to early childhood where autonomy in play builds metacognitive awareness and resilience.

Furthermore, concentration and sustained attention were found to be integral for optimizing the benefits of role-playing. Neuroscience-based educational research confirms that attentional control enhances the encoding and retrieval of knowledge, even at the preschool stage. The observed improvement in children's ability to stay

focused on their roles and engage in sustained dramatic play directly translated into better comprehension of Pancasila values, such as cooperation and mutual respect.

The interplay between participation and outcomes, while generally positive, was not linear. Variations in engagement reflected the multifaceted nature of young children's learning, influenced by individual temperament, developmental readiness, and classroom dynamics. As noted by Sari et al. (2020), learning is better understood as a nonlinear, dynamic system shaped by multiple interacting variables. For ECE, this means that effective facilitation requires flexibility, sensitivity to children's needs, and creative adaptation of role-playing scenarios.

Pedagogically, these findings highlight a transformative imperative for early childhood educators. Teachers must move beyond directive instruction and instead create environments where children can actively engage, express themselves, and explore values experientially. This aligns with calls from Kurniawan and Hermawan (2021) for participatory, child-centered approaches that maximize developmental potential. By integrating role-playing into Pancasila education, teachers can cultivate intrinsic motivation, empathy, and collaborative skills, forming the basis for lifelong learning and citizenship.

In sum, this study affirms that quality learning in early childhood education extends far beyond cognitive achievement. The essence of success lies in fostering active engagement, nurturing motivation, and empowering children to construct knowledge and values through social interaction and creative play. Role-playing thus represents a powerful pedagogical tool for instilling foundational competencies and moral values, equipping young learners with the dispositions necessary for resilience, autonomy, and meaningful participation in society.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that the implementation of the Role Playing method significantly enhances learning experiences in Pancasila Education, particularly when adapted to the context of early childhood education. While the original research was conducted with older students, the results highlight principles that are highly transferable to ECE settings, where play and active participation form the core of meaningful learning. The data reveal that increased engagement through role enactment fosters not only cognitive development but also the internalization of social and moral values, such as cooperation, empathy, and respect—values that are essential to the foundations of Pancasila.

In addition to supporting academic growth, the study emphasizes the central role of motivation and engagement in children's learning processes. Active involvement in role-playing creates a dynamic and interactive environment that stimulates curiosity, encourages imagination, and nurtures confidence. These qualities are particularly critical in early childhood, as they form the building blocks for later success in formal schooling. The observed improvements in participation also suggest that role-playing offers an effective strategy for promoting holistic development across cognitive, affective, and social domains.

Based on these insights, early childhood educators are encouraged to incorporate role-playing activities more intentionally into their teaching of Pancasila values and related subjects. Teachers can strengthen children's autonomy and responsibility by assigning roles that encourage decision-making and collaboration, while also scaffolding the activities to ensure inclusivity and meaningful participation for all learners. Professional development programs focusing on interactive, child-centered pedagogy can further equip teachers with the skills to design creative role-playing scenarios aligned with children's developmental needs.

Equally important is the cultivation of collaborative professional learning communities where teachers can share strategies, challenges, and successes in implementing role-playing. Such networks not only enhance teaching practices but also ensure that role-playing remains contextually relevant and adaptable to diverse ECE environments. Ultimately, fostering active engagement and play-based learning through role-playing will not only enhance children's educational experiences but also contribute meaningfully to the long-term goal of cultivating resilient, empathetic, and value-oriented citizens grounded in the spirit of Pancasila.

Acknowledgments

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