

Educational Storybook Development to Cultivate Gotong Royong: A Needs Analysis Based on the Pancasila Student Profile Framework

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the need to develop storybooks as a medium to strengthen the gotong royong (cooperation) dimension within the Pancasila Student Profile framework. A qualitative approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon. The study was conducted in three public elementary schools in Sukadana District, Ciamis Regency, involving three purposively selected fourth-grade teachers based on their experience in teaching gotong royong values. Data collection techniques included classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, which were used triangulatively to enhance data credibility. Data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994), involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings reveal that storybooks play a crucial role as effective media in character education, particularly for internalizing the value of gotong royong, which is a core dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile. The literature review uncovered a scarcity of storybooks explicitly promoting gotong royong, while field data confirmed the limited integration of this value in formal instructional materials. Furthermore, teachers emphasized the importance of developing storybooks that are contextual and rooted in local wisdom, enabling students to understand better and internalize these values. This study identifies a significant opportunity for educational innovation through the development of culturally and socially relevant narrative-based learning media as a means to strengthen student character.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia plays a strategic role in shaping the character of future generations by nurturing citizens who are culturally grounded and globally competitive. As stipulated in national education objectives, the development of individuals who are faithful, morally upright, intelligent, and reflective of Pancasila values is a central aim. In line with this, the *Pancasila Student Profile* (Profil Pelajar Pancasila) has been introduced as a strategic framework for character education at all school levels (Jamaludin et al., 2022; Utami & Prabowo, 2023). Issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, this framework comprises six core dimensions: faith in God and noble character, global diversity, cooperation (*gotong royong*), critical thinking, creativity, and independence (Ramadhan & Putra, 2025; Munawaroh et al., 2024). According to Ghofur et al. (2024), these dimensions are integral to the implementation of the national curriculum, with the aim of fostering ethical awareness and civic responsibility from an early stage of education.

Recent studies have highlighted the role of the *Pancasila Student Profile* in supporting not only academic excellence but also the development of open-mindedness and critical reasoning, which are essential for democratic citizenship (Herdiansyah et al., 2024). Within this policy context, the *Merdeka Belajar* initiative has emerged as a transformative approach to enhancing education quality by promoting creativity, independence, and critical thinking through student-centered learning experiences. Aligned with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy of educational humanism, *Merdeka Belajar* seeks to humanize the learning process and adapt instruction to students' interests and life

contexts (Efendi, Muhtar, & Herlambang, 2023; Heryanti, Muhtar, & Herlambang, 2023). Notably, this policy has proven effective at the early childhood level by integrating joyful and contextual learning activities (Nursarofah, 2022). Change agents such as *guru penggerak* (motivator teachers) and transformative school leadership play vital roles in realizing the goals of *Merdeka Belajar*, particularly in encouraging participatory, creative, and reflective learning environments (Supit et al., 2023; Angga & Iskandar, 2022).

Building upon this, pedagogical approaches within the *Merdeka Belajar* framework are intentionally designed to embed character values aligned with the *Pancasila Student Profile* through inclusive and contextual instruction. For instance, Juwita, Masudi, and Zulaiha (2024) demonstrated that the implementation of the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project* effectively instills character through reflective and experiential learning. In this regard, *guru penggerak* not only function as facilitators but also act as key agents of pedagogical transformation (Hutabarat, Panjaitan, & Sinaga, 2024). In subject-specific contexts such as history education, the *Merdeka Curriculum* allows for the integration of Pancasila values into both instructional content and methods, thereby reinforcing the moral and civic development of students (Bahroni & Zulkarnain, 2024).

One of the most emphasized dimensions in this character formation is *gotong royong*, a deeply rooted cultural value that promotes cooperation, mutual aid, and community concern. Scholars have emphasized that the practice of *gotong royong* in classroom settings fosters solidarity and social cohesion across primary and Islamic educational institutions (Sabir, Hajar, & Kaharuddin, 2024; Hasanah, Ni'mah, & Badruttamam, 2024; Pertiwi, 2023). Rahayu and colleagues (2023, 2024) argue that integrating local wisdom, including *gotong royong*, is critical to forming adaptive, responsible, and ethically grounded students in a globalized context. Nevertheless, as documented by several studies, the internalization of *gotong royong* still faces considerable challenges, mainly due to the lack of engaging instructional media (Atmaja, 2024; Rohmah, Narimo, & Widyasari, 2023). In response to these challenges, recent research has underscored the importance of developing culturally-based and innovative learning media to embed these values meaningfully in students (Sinaga, Woran, & Sinambela, 2021).

Among the available media for character education, educational storybooks have emerged as a promising vehicle for promoting values such as *gotong royong*. Through compelling narratives and visual storytelling, such books provide an accessible and enjoyable platform for conveying moral messages to young learners (Havita & Sa'diyah, 2024; Rosvita & Rahim, 2025). The use of digital formats further enhances their appeal, particularly for early learners accustomed to interactive media (Nurhaeti & Romadona, 2024; Wulandari & Alamin, 2020). Beyond entertainment, these storybooks stimulate empathy, imagination, and moral reasoning, presenting culturally relevant situations that exemplify *gotong royong* in everyday life (Saleh, Asrina, & Idris, 2021; Amaliyah & Wahab, 2019; Perceka, Hidayat, & Tohir, 2015).

Given the importance of embedding cultural values within character education, the present study seeks to explore the development of educational storybooks aimed at strengthening the *gotong royong* dimension of the *Pancasila Student Profile*. Specifically, this study adopts a literature-based approach to identify key concepts, relevant pedagogical strategies, and best practices in utilizing storybooks as instructional media for character education. The focus is placed on primary education, particularly targeting Grade IV students, where character formation remains a crucial component of the learning process.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the need for developing storybooks as a medium to strengthen the *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) dimension within the Pancasila Student Profile framework. This approach was chosen as it allows for the exploration of phenomena in a naturalistic and holistic manner, emphasizing meaning, lived experiences, and the subjective interpretations of participants within their social contexts (Creswell,

2014). The research was conducted in three public elementary schools located in Sukadana District, Ciamis Regency, West Java Province. The participants consisted of three fourth-grade teachers from different schools, selected purposively based on their experience in teaching *gotong royong* as part of the Pancasila Education subject.

To obtain rich and in-depth data, this study employed three primary data collection techniques: classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. These methods were used triangulatively to enhance the credibility of the findings. Each technique is described as follows:

1. Observation

Classroom observations were carried out during fourth-grade Pancasila Education lessons, particularly when teaching the *gotong royong* topic. The observation aimed to document teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, and the use of learning media. Observational data were recorded as narrative field notes in a descriptive format.

2. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with fourth-grade teachers who had experience teaching the values of *gotong royong*. The interviews aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on the need for storybooks as learning media, the criteria they expect, and the challenges they face in promoting these values. The interviews were semi-structured, guided by open-ended questions, and designed to provide participants with the flexibility to share their views freely. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3. Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted by reviewing relevant documents such as curricula, teaching modules, and other instructional materials related to the *gotong royong* theme in Pancasila Education. The purpose was to identify the extent to which storybooks or similar media were included or needed to support the teaching of moral values.

The data obtained from the three collection methods were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three key stages:

1. Data reduction, which refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, and organizing raw data that is relevant to the focus of the research;
2. Data display, which involves presenting data in the form of thematic narratives, tables, or matrices to facilitate pattern recognition and interpretation;
3. Conclusion drawing and verification, a continuous process of interpreting data by comparing sources to ensure the consistency and validity of interpretations.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, source and method triangulation was employed (Patton, 1999). Additionally, *member checking* was conducted, whereby the interpreted findings were returned to the participants for confirmation of accuracy and alignment with their actual experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Findings from the Literature Review

The literature review conducted as part of this study aimed to explore the significance of reinforcing the value of *gotong royong* (cooperation) in elementary education and to identify the need for appropriate learning media, particularly narrative-based materials such as storybooks. The analysis focused on four major themes that emerged consistently across the reviewed sources.

1. The Role of Storybooks in Character Education

The review revealed that storybooks are widely acknowledged as an effective educational medium for fostering character development in primary school students. Storytelling was found to serve as a meaningful strategy for internalizing values, as it conveys moral messages through narratives that are emotionally engaging and contextually relevant to children's everyday experiences. It was consistently observed across the literature that children are more receptive to value-based messages when these

are embedded in stories featuring relatable characters and real-life situations. This pedagogical function of narrative allows for the development of empathy, moral reasoning, and social understanding. Therefore, storybooks are considered to play a crucial role in shaping positive character traits, including cooperation, respect, and empathy.

2. The *Gotong Royong* Dimension within the Pancasila Student Profile

Another key finding is that *gotong royong* constitutes one of the six core dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes collaboration, social awareness, mutual respect, and teamwork. However, the literature suggests that this dimension has not yet been fully integrated into instructional resources used in the classroom. While the value of *gotong royong* is often expressed through extracurricular or community-based activities, there appears to be a lack of systematic efforts to embed it explicitly within formal learning materials. This lack of integration raises concerns about the consistency and depth of students' exposure to this key value during regular instructional time. It was frequently reported that existing teaching materials rarely highlight *gotong royong* as a central theme, particularly in narrative formats suitable for younger learners. As a result, there is an emerging need to design storybooks that purposefully incorporate this value within academic subjects, particularly in Pancasila Education.

3. Limited Availability of Storybooks Promoting *Gotong Royong*

The review also identified a significant gap in the availability of storybooks that explicitly promote the value of *gotong royong*. While a variety of children's books are available in schools, most of these were found to focus on entertainment or individual-centered themes rather than collective values. Several sources pointed out that the representation of cooperative behaviors, group problem-solving, or acts of social concern is often minimal or absent. This limitation reduces the opportunities for teachers to utilize story-based learning as a vehicle for value transmission. The findings imply that existing storybooks do not adequately support the goals of character education, particularly in terms of social and communal values. Consequently, the absence of targeted storybooks presents a challenge for educators seeking to align their teaching practices with national educational goals related to moral and civic development.

4. The Need for Contextual and Culturally Relevant Storybooks

Finally, a prominent theme that emerged from the literature was the importance of developing storybooks that are not only value-based but also culturally and contextually appropriate. It was repeatedly noted that students are more likely to engage with and internalize messages conveyed through stories that reflect their cultural settings, social realities, and everyday experiences. Contextual relevance enhances comprehension and increases the emotional connection students feel with the characters and narratives. In line with the principles of meaningful and student-centered learning, which are emphasized in the national curriculum, locally rooted stories are considered essential for fostering more profound understanding and lasting impact. Thus, the literature supports the development of storybooks that are not only rich in moral content but also reflective of students' linguistic, social, and cultural environments.

Integration of Literature Review and Field Findings

To deepen the understanding of the literature review findings, this study collected primary data through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with fourth-grade teachers, and analysis of teaching-related documents. These findings are presented thematically and compared with insights gained from the literature, highlighting both the convergence and divergence between theory and practice.

1. Reinforcement of Character Values through Story-Based Learning

Field observations conducted in three fourth-grade classrooms revealed that character education, especially in the context of Pancasila Education, was primarily delivered through oral explanations or discussions. Teachers often relied on conventional textbook materials, and storytelling was rarely integrated into the lesson structure. Although all observed teachers emphasized the

importance of cooperation (*gotong royong*), these values were not always presented through engaging narratives.

In line with the literature, teachers interviewed confirmed the potential of storybooks to make character values more relatable. One participant stated, "Children tend to understand better when values are illustrated through stories. When I tell them a short anecdote, they ask more questions and seem more involved emotionally." This finding supports the literature's assertion that narratives enhance moral comprehension by providing emotionally engaging and contextually grounded scenarios.

2. Gaps in Teaching Materials Addressing *Gotong Royong*

Document analysis showed that the current textbooks and teaching modules rarely contain content that explicitly addresses *gotong royong* as a central theme. While some references to cooperation exist, they are typically brief and not elaborated through story-driven examples.

Teachers also expressed challenges in finding materials that could support the development of this specific dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile. One respondent shared: "We are encouraged to develop the Pancasila Profile, but the materials we have do not really cover how to teach *gotong royong* in meaningful ways—especially in the form of stories or books." This aligns with the literature review, which emphasized the scarcity of storybooks designed to reinforce *gotong royong* within classroom settings. The lack of contextual story-based materials contributes to a disconnect between national curriculum expectations and everyday classroom practices.

3. Importance of Local and Contextual Narratives

Teachers uniformly emphasized the importance of stories that reflect the students' cultural and social realities. Observational data showed that when teachers used local examples—even brief ones—students became more enthusiastic and could easily relate their experiences to the values being taught. One observed instance involved a teacher telling a story about a traditional rice harvest festival in the village, where cooperation among villagers was essential. The students were visibly engaged, and several offered their own experiences about helping their families during harvest. This suggests that contextually grounded stories resonate more with learners and facilitate more profound understanding.

Teachers affirmed this during interviews:

"When the story includes things they see in their village, they are much more excited. They can visualize it, and sometimes even share similar events from their own lives."

This finding substantiates the literature's call for the development of culturally relevant and localized storybooks. It also reinforces the idea that abstract values become more tangible when anchored in familiar settings.

4. Emerging Needs and Opportunities

The integration of literature and field data highlights an evident opportunity for educational innovation. It is both timely and necessary to develop storybooks that are explicitly aligned with the *gotong royong* dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile and that reflect local wisdom. Both literature and field findings indicate that teachers are motivated to use narrative-based approaches, but lack the necessary resources. The study, therefore, identifies a clear pedagogical gap that could be addressed through the co-creation of contextual storybooks in collaboration with teachers, local authors, and curriculum developers. Such materials would not only support value education but also contribute to more engaging and meaningful learning experiences for students.

Discussion

The present findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the effectiveness of storytelling in character education. Observations and teacher interviews conducted in this study indicate that students engage more deeply with moral lessons when these are delivered through stories featuring relatable characters and everyday scenarios. This outcome corroborates earlier studies, which suggest that narratives serve as a powerful medium for value transmission within

educational settings. By embedding values such as cooperation in emotionally resonant narratives, storybooks not only capture students' attention but also facilitate moral comprehension through social imagination and empathy. Thus, these results support the widely accepted view that storytelling constitutes a potent pedagogical tool for fostering character development in primary education.

However, despite the official emphasis on gotong royong as a core dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile, the findings reveal limited integration of this value through narrative media in current classroom practices. Field observations and teacher interviews consistently point to a reliance on didactic methods, such as textbook readings and direct moral instruction, rather than interactive or story-based approaches. This discrepancy contrasts with the national curriculum's call for student-centered and contextual learning. In line with this, Suprpto and Rois (2024) note that although cultural narratives embedded in local folklore offer rich pedagogical resources for character education, they remain underutilized in formal instruction. Similarly, Fitrianto and Farisi (2025) argue that the integration of local wisdom into 21st-century competencies tends to be superficial in the absence of culturally grounded materials. The persistence of traditional instructional strategies reflects the negotiation by teachers between curricular expectations and entrenched pedagogical habits, as observed by Adityas (2022) in the context of moral and civic education. Furthermore, Redjeki et al. (2025) emphasize that revitalizing national identity through cultural values requires more than rhetorical support; it demands material transformation in classroom practices. Collectively, these findings suggest that curricular intentions have yet to be fully realized in either instructional materials or daily teaching strategies. Without purposeful integration, such as through contextual storybooks emphasizing gotong royong, the transformative goals of character education remain aspirational rather than operational.

A plausible explanation for this gap is the scarcity of storybooks that explicitly promote cooperative values such as gotong royong. Research by Syafutri, Walidi, and Ladiva (2025) shows that while extracurricular activities like Pramuka are utilized to strengthen the Pancasila student profile and foster cooperation, classroom instructional materials insufficiently embed these collective values. Similarly, teachers report a lack of teaching resources that adequately reflect students' cultural and social realities, which impedes the effective internalization of cooperative principles (Brilyan et al., 2025). This concern resonates with findings by Maryam (2025) and Susandi et al. (2025), who highlight that local religious traditions and cultural wisdom, though critical for meaningful learning, remain underrepresented in curricular materials. Moreover, Cecep and Rohmanudin (2024) argue that despite the Merdeka Curriculum's potential to enhance creativity and contextual learning, its implementation faces challenges due to the limited availability of culturally relevant and value-based storybooks. These results substantiate earlier claims that educational resources often prioritize individual achievement over collective values, thereby limiting students' opportunities to develop a strong sense of social cooperation through narrative learning.

An unexpected but significant finding of this study is that students' engagement increases markedly when stories are drawn from familiar cultural settings. This observation supports the argument that cultural relevance plays a crucial role in the internalization of values, a factor often underestimated in the design of educational materials. Subasman and Nasiruddin (2024) emphasize that character-building programs in Islamic education become more effective when incorporating local cultural elements familiar to students, enhancing both comprehension and personal connection. Likewise, Umam and Husain (2024) contend that integrating local wisdom into religious education fosters critical reflection and deeper moral understanding by situating learning within students' lived realities. Barokah (2025) further substantiates this principle by demonstrating, through a case study on the Bancakan Gerhono tradition, that blending scientific knowledge with local cultural practices enriches students' conceptual understanding and engagement. Furthermore, Firdaus (2024) points out that embedding environmental awareness within Islamic curricula via culturally contextualized materials contributes not only to value education but also to broader sustainable development goals (SDGs). From a pedagogical standpoint, Manuahe (2024) suggests that interactive communication

technologies reflecting cultural contexts can further enhance student participation and motivation. These findings resonate with Rousseau's philosophy of natural education, as explicated by Lasterman and Sihotang (2024), advocating learning that emerges organically from the learner's immediate environment. Taken together, this body of evidence underscores that meaningful learning and value internalization are most effectively achieved when abstract concepts are anchored in the cultural and experiential realities familiar to students.

Taken together, these findings indicate a pressing need to develop storybooks that are not only rich in values but also deeply embedded in local cultural contexts. This implies that curriculum developers should adopt a more collaborative approach by engaging teachers and local communities in the design and development of learning materials. Such collaboration can ensure that educational content remains relevant and meaningful, thereby facilitating the internalization of Pancasila values through culturally grounded narratives. Integrating these narratives into formal education can considerably strengthen character education by making moral lessons more accessible and engaging for students. Therefore, curriculum innovation and the development of teaching media must prioritize contextualization and cultural relevance to enhance the effectiveness of value-based education.

To extend this line of inquiry, further research is needed to explore how various narrative structures affect students' moral reasoning and long-term retention of values. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the enduring impact of utilizing local storybooks on students' behavior in both school and community contexts. Additionally, investigating the collaborative process among curriculum developers, teachers, and communities in producing culturally responsive storybooks may reveal its effects on teachers' professional growth and pedagogical practices. Such research could inform more effective strategies for curriculum innovation and teacher training aimed at fostering comprehensive character education.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that storybooks play a vital role in character education by effectively fostering the value of gotong royong among elementary students through emotionally engaging and contextually relevant narratives. However, a significant gap exists between the Pancasila Student Profile's emphasis on gotong royong and the current classroom practices, which lack adequate story-based learning materials explicitly addressing this value. The findings highlight the scarcity of culturally and contextually relevant storybooks that resonate with students' social realities, which limits teachers' ability to integrate cooperation meaningfully into their lessons. Consequently, there is a clear need for the development of locally grounded narrative materials that align with national curriculum goals. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of collaboratively creating storybooks that embed the gotong royong value within familiar cultural contexts to enhance student engagement and moral understanding. Future research should investigate the long-term impact of such narrative-based interventions on students' social behavior and explore collaborative approaches to developing culturally responsive educational resources.

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