Religious Orientations in Pancasila Student Projects: Insights from the Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The *Merdeka* Curriculum represents an educational reform aimed at enhancing the quality of learning in Indonesia. A central component of this curriculum is the Project for Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students (P5), which seeks to cultivate students' core values, including religious character. However, the religious dimension of the P5 profile remains underexplored, especially at the elementary level. This study analyzes the implementation of the P5 project in developing students' religious profiles in elementary schools in Kebumen, focusing on Grades I and IV. Data were collected using focus group discussions, interviews, observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Findings reveal that students exhibit strong religious characteristics across five indicators: religious behavior (88.75%), personal behavior (88.50%), social behavior (87.88%), environmental behavior (80.50%), and national behavior (88.00%). These outcomes place the religious attitudes of students in the "excellent" category. Schools employed various strategies to instill religious values aligned with the P5 framework. These included narrative-based instruction, daily habituation practices, and teacher modeling to foster faith, piety toward God, and noble conduct. The implementation of P5 in the religious dimension has been effective in cultivating strong religious attitudes among elementary students. These findings highlight the importance of integrated character-building approaches within the *Merdeka* Curriculum.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religiosity is one of the primary factors in human life marked by a belief in the existence of God (Dewi et al., 2020). It is manifested in an individual's process of learning about the teachings they believe in and aligning their behavior with the religious teachings. Religiosity encompasses the overall functions of an individual's soul, including beliefs, feelings, and consciously directed behavior towards religious teachings (Alshehri et al., 2021). Within these teachings, there are five dimensions of religiosity, covering obligatory worship practices, as well as individual experiences and knowledge of religion. High religiosity is indicated by behavior consistent with the adopted religious teachings (Taragin-Zeller et al., 2020). Religious values are crucial for elementary/madrasah students, providing a foundation for self-control and positive behavior (Rahiem, 2021). Good religious behavior also has a positive impact on those around them, reflecting what is understood and believed in their religion.

Students tend to show religious attitudes by living according to religious rules, cultivating habits of worship, fearing the consequences of breaking the rules, and experiencing the beauty of a religious life (Fahmi et al., 2023; Sastradiharja et al., 2021). Religious values embedded in cultural and national character education include obedient attitudes in practicing religious teachings, tolerance in worship, and harmonious living with followers of other religions (Fathurrohman, 2013; Lisnawati & Caturiasari, 2023; R, 2016). Meanwhile, according to Glock and Stark (Nurrahman & Irawan, 2019), there are four dimensions of religiosity: belief dimension, related to the acceptance and recognition of dogmatic elements in one's religion; worship dimension, associated with the level of fulfilling religious ritual obligations; feeling dimension, the religious experiences one undergoes; and knowledge dimension, the level of understanding one has about their religious teachings. Religious character is essential for students to face societal changes and moral degradation, ensuring they develop personalities and behaviors aligned with ethical standards and religious principles (Anam, 2019).

Unfortunately, real-world observations indicate contradictory behaviors. Not all students exhibit good religious behavior. Previous research observations revealed that some students lack manners, using inappropriate language towards teachers or peers (Lewomuda et al., 2023). Students may also neglect greetings when passing teachers and skip prayer activities at the beginning of lessons. Furthermore, questionnaire results showed that 19 out of 23 students faced religiosity issues, demonstrating undisciplined behavior in worshiping the Almighty. To address these issues, the government is making efforts to change educational curriculum policies in Indonesia. The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Research has introduced effective programs, such as the implementation of the independent learning curriculum. This curriculum allows teachers to organize learning according to students' needs. One of the key components of this curriculum is the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) Strengthening Project (Walukow et al., 2023). This program aims to reinforce students' characters in accordance with Pancasila. P5 involves the cultivation of intra- and extra-curricular learning qualities.

The Pancasila student profile consists of six main dimensions: 1) faith, piety towards the Almighty God, and noble behavior; 2) global diversity; 3) mutual cooperation; 4) independence; 5) critical thinking; and 6) creativity (Hasbi & Muktamar, 2023; Irawati et al., 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2022). The P5 development program is outlined in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 22 of 2020 on the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2020-2024 (Indarti et al., 2023). This strategic plan focuses on independent learning policies as a guide for human resource development and interdisciplinary educational initiatives. Additionally, the plan aims to organize and maximize the demographic bonus, which is the key to the nation's progress towards social justice. Furthermore, this is done with the goal of encouraging students to observe, reflect, and find solutions to issues within their environment.

The P5 learning process takes place outside the classroom. The P5 project provides students with the opportunity to learn in their surroundings in a relaxed manner, with flexible learning methods and active participation in social activities (Kurniawan & Wijarnako, 2023). The project is designed to allow students to explore, solve problems, create products or activities aligned with its mission, and make well-informed decisions (Lisnawati & Caturiasari, 2023). Therefore, P5 represents a new effort to

involve students in the education process to socialize Pancasila values as desired. Religiosity is part of the Pancasila student profile dimension, especially in the dimension of faith, piety towards the Almighty God, and noble behavior. This dimension reflects an individual's religious attitudes, and the success of these religious attitudes can be achieved by implementing P5 effectively.

Several studies on P5 have been conducted collaboratively and individually. Previous research findings revealed that P5 activities are maximized through collaborative learning and working, strengthening the project's implementation (Falabiba, 2014). Other findings highlighted the implementation of P5 in leading schools (Rachmawati et al., 2022). Furthermore, research on P5 was conducted by Andiyani Safitri et al., revealing that the development of P5 is carried out in project form to shape students into Pancasila-characterized individuals. Research by Lisnawati & Caturiasari (Lisnawati & Caturiasari, 2023) also focused on the implementation of P5 in all dimensions in leading schools at the early childhood, elementary, and secondary education levels. In this study, the main focus is on the dimension of religiosity within P5 conducted at the elementary school level. Until now, research on P5 has mainly focused on its implementation without specifically examining one of its crucial dimensions in daily life, such as the dimension of religiosity, which is fundamental and influences other dimensions. Religious character aims to foster the balanced and harmonious development of individuals based on the values of Pancasila. Religious character plays a role in shaping students' ethical, moral, and spiritual aspects, helping them understand and appreciate diversity, build empathy, and nurture tolerance. In the context of Pancasila, which prioritizes unity and social justice, strong religious character supports the growth of love, honesty, and responsibility, which are crucial for creating a society based on mutual respect, peace, and national integrity. Religious character also plays an important role in shaping responsible, moral, and character-driven citizens who contribute positively to society and the nation. Thus, an exploration of the religiosity profile within P5 is a novel and essential aspect that has not been previously studied and requires further investigation.

Building on the presented background, the research problem is formulated as follows: What is the profile of students' religiosity in the Pancasila student profile strengthening project in elementary schools (SD/MI)? This research aims to analyze the profile of students' religiosity in the Pancasila student profile strengthening project in elementary schools.

2. METHODS

A qualitative research approach is employed in this study. Qualitative research is defined as post-positivism research that seeks to portray natural phenomena or events without intentional influence, as seen in experimental research (Creswell, 2014). The use of qualitative research is chosen because the researcher aims to directly analyze the phenomenon of students' religiosity profiles in the Pancasila student profile strengthening project in elementary schools. This research is conducted in the Kebumen Regency. Four elementary schools are designated as the subjects of this research, selected using purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is defined as a sampling technique based on specific objectives or predetermined criteria that align with the research focus (Gower & Shanks, 2014). The four schools serve as pilot projects for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Kebumen area, Central Java. The selection of grade 1 and 4 is based on these classes being the references in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Various techniques are used in the data collection process. Firstly, the observation technique is employed to observe the learning process taking place in the classroom, serving as a means to implement the Pancasila student profile strengthening project and to identify the planting of students' religiosity attitudes. Observation sheets are used to collect data from this technique, containing several statements. Secondly, interviews are conducted to confirm data obtained from observations and to supplement data that may not be fulfilled through observation, resulting in richer and more focused research data. Interview guidelines are used to collect data during the interview process, and recording tools on a mobile phone are used to capture respondents' answers, allowing the researcher to review

the interview process. The recording is aimed at obtaining more accurate data. The interview guidelines conducted include the implementation of classroom learning and school activities that support the development of religious character, such as extracurricular activities and habituation activities at school. The observation guidelines include the learning environment, learning activities, extracurricular activities, and students' experiences in habituating religious character. Thirdly, documentation technique is used to complement secondary source data, such as teaching modules created by teachers, students' religious education grades, documentation of the independent curriculum at each school, and other essential documents supporting the research data.

The data is then analyzed using the interactive analysis technique formulated by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (Miles et al., 2014). This study utilizes the data analysis technique of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusions Data condensation involves first collecting data and then sorting it based on research needs. If there is deemed irrelevant data, it is disregarded. In data reduction, classification is also done based on variables. The data is divided into two main aspects: data about religiosity profiles and data about the Pancasila student profile strengthening project. The next stage involves presenting the data in various forms, including descriptions, tables, and figures, allowing readers to understand the meaning of the research data. The final step is verification/conclusion drawing, where existing data is summarized based on the research objectives, and overall conclusions are made from the conclusions of each objective.

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3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research only focuses on the aspects of mutual cooperation/cooperation, independence and critical reasoning. The Pancasila Student Profile is an achievement that is always included in every lesson. Based on the Merdeka Curriculum, every lesson is expected to be able to accommodate the Pancasila Student Profile. The Pancasila Student Profile has six competencies consisting of faith, devotion to God Almighty, noble morals, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity (Marsidin, 2022).

The project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile in elementary schools in Kebumen Regency has been implemented in grades 1 and 4. The project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile is a character characteristic that must be present in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. P5 is the main goal of schools in shaping the personality of students. The aspect of religiosity is the first dimension in P5, namely the dimension of believing, being pious to the Almighty God and being noble in character. This dimension is about understanding the teachings of religion and belief and applying that understanding in everyday life. The Ministry of Education and Culture divides five key elements in the dimension of believing, being pious to God Almighty and being noble in character, namely: religious morality, personal morality, morality towards humans, morality towards nature, and morality towards the state. These key elements are the aspects of measuring the religiosity of students in the project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile in the study. Figure 1 is the profile of student religiosity viewed from various aspects.
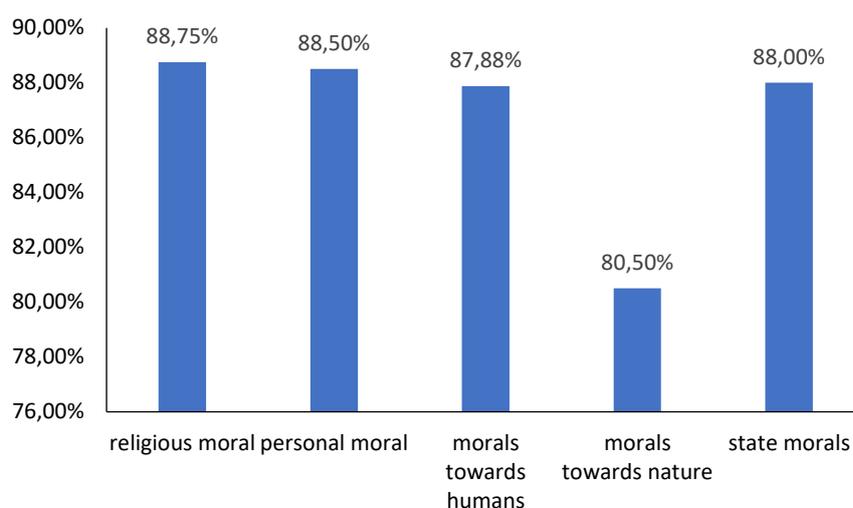
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Figure 1. Student religiosity profile

Picture 1 shows that the religiosity profile of the participants indicates excellent criteria, with the aspect of religious ethics being the most significant at 88.75% compared to other aspects. Religious character, placed in the first position, reflects the significant role of religious character in every student in Indonesia. Marzuki and colleagues state that religious character is an essential aspect and strategy in achieving national educational goals (Marzuki & Haq, 2018). Indawati and others explain that religious character education is a crucial trait that educators must strongly instill in their students (Indawati et al., 2022). Before educating children, a teacher must be a good role model for their students.Adnan and colleagues emphasize that with good religious attitudes, there will be a balance between the functions of the mind and heart, enabling someone to think well, stay calm, and be patient (Adnan et al., 2021). Supported by Abdel-Klalek & Lester, individuals, in this case, are students with religious beliefs who are considered more capable of overcoming psychological pressures during learning activities (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2017). An individual or student who is spiritually healthy will have a positive impact on the progress of national education (Anita & Kartowagiran, 2019). Especially in the midst of the rapid and complex development of globalization, individuals with strong spirits are needed to avoid feelings of despair, depression, stress, and even suicide (Anita & Kartowagiran, 2019). Especially in the midst of the rapid and complex development of globalization, individuals with strong spirits are needed to avoid feelings of despair, depression, stress, and even suicide (Mufron et al., 2021). Pridayanti and colleagues mention in their findings that every individual must have a religious character. Religious character is the primary foundation for developing other traits because religious values guide good deeds (Pridayanti et al., 2022).

However, this study focuses more on the religious activities of Muslim students. This becomes a limitation in this research, highlighting the need for a deeper review of religious character development for minority students. To gain a more profound and inclusive understanding of religious character development, further research is needed on minority students. By expanding the scope of the research to include minority students, we can gain a deeper understanding of how schools can support the development of religious character in all students. This is important for creating an inclusive learning environment and promoting the values of tolerance and mutual respect.

3.1 Elements of religious morals

This element is related to students understanding the attributes of God and realizing that the essence of God's attributes is love and compassion. This element teaches students to appreciate and reflect God's attributes in their behavior in daily life, taking responsibility for loving and caring for themselves, fellow human beings, and nature, as well as following God's commandments and avoiding

prohibitions from the Almighty. The indicators for religious ethics studied include recognizing and loving the Almighty, understanding religion/beliefs, and performing worship rituals. Based on observations and interviews, the aspect of religious ethics in elementary school students has been categorized as good. Some activities observed in the development of the religious ethics element in elementary schools include commemorating religious holidays, performing mid-morning prayers, congregational prayers, Quranic recitation, and so on.

Figure 2. Commemoration of religious holidays

Based on the results of interviews with several elementary school teachers, the schedule for mid-morning prayers and congregational prayers in the prayer room is consistently adhered to, and students are responsible for performing their worship. Although this ritual aspect is a common and repetitive behavior in daily life, engaging in positive activities consistently and regularly will shape character on a profound level. According to interviews with several students, their motivation for participating in routine ritual activities is to deepen their worship, as well as to enhance their faith and piety towards God.

Figure 3. Worship activities

Collective worship activities at school serve as a means for students to implement "habluminallah" (a good relationship with God). This program aims to guide students in incorporating religious teachings into every action and behavior in their daily lives (Burhannudian, 2019; Rosalia et al., 2023). These activities will enhance the students' faith and piety towards God. Sadaruddin explains that religious ethics is related to an individual's relationship with Allah. Being ethical towards God is true faith, which involves believing in the oneness and divinity of God. This can be achieved by having taqwa (piety), tawakal (reliance on God), and gratitude (Sadaruddin, 2020).

3.2 Elements of personal morals

This element focuses on the love and attention that students have for themselves. Having a caring, considerate, respectful, and self-appreciative attitude manifests in integrity, which involves consistent actions aligned with one's words and thoughts. Indicators of personal ethics include integrity and self-care in physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. Some attitudes developed in the personal ethics element include cultivating honesty towards oneself and others and having the courage to convey the truth. This aspect is developed in Phase A or Grade 1, while in Phase B or Grade IV, students are capable of cultivating honesty towards themselves and others, having the courage to convey the truth, and reflecting on their actions. Daily activities that can be observed include when students work on daily assignments and assessments (See figure 4). In completing the tasks, students are guided by teachers to work independently and trust in their abilities. Based on interviews with several teachers in elementary school, the encouragement and motivation from teachers help students believe in their own abilities. This can prompt students to exhibit honesty during daily assignments or assessments. The cultivation of honesty is expected to be developed in daily activities.

Figure 4. Daily test activities

As a way of keeping the body healthy, the school encourages students to engage in sports activities together. This is aimed at cultivating a healthy lifestyle. These activities are usually conducted on Fridays. The school plans various activities to promote physical fitness and well-being, such as gymnastics, health walks, and others.

Figure 5. Sports Activities

The activities mentioned above serve as several examples of school activities aimed at developing religious character in the aspect of personal ethics/self-character. The development of this aspect is crucial because when students have a good character, they will possess strong faith. Sadaruddin explains that someone with a strong personal character has a strong foundation of faith, leading to virtuous behavior. This is because character reflects one's faith (Sadaruddin, 2020).

3.3 Elements of Morals for Humans

This element focuses on the students' attitude of compassion towards fellow human beings. Students are encouraged to prioritize similarities and humanity over differences, appreciating the diversity that exists among others. In this element, teachers guide students to become individuals who are moderate in their religious beliefs. They are instilled with a high level of tolerance towards differences among their peers. Students are developed to have an attitude of respecting beliefs and freedom in practicing worship according to their respective religions and beliefs, without imposing their religion on others. By cultivating an attitude of mutual respect among individuals, unity and harmony can be achieved, fostering a sense of compassion towards one another.Based on observations, students seem to exhibit a compassionate attitude towards their peers. They assist each other when someone is facing difficulties or needs help, regardless of differences in race, gender, religion, and so on. In interviews with some students, it was mentioned that they are very happy to help their friends in need. They believe that mutual respect and appreciation can foster a spirit of unity and togetherness. Other students expressed sadness when witnessing bullying at school. This creates an uncomfortable atmosphere because bullies fail to appreciate differences, such as mocking the skin color or hair type of other students. This aligns with the indicators of the ethics towards humanity element, which include prioritizing similarities, appreciating differences, and empathizing with others.

One of the programs implemented by the school to develop moderate character in students is the guidance provided by teachers to consistently foster a positive attitude among students towards their peers (Aisyah & Anan, 2024). Based on interviews with one teacher, the school strongly supports the development of a high level of tolerance among all members of the school community. This commitment positions the school to be child-friendly and anti-bullying. With this program, students will feel more comfortable attending school and engaging socially with all members of the school community (Fatimah & Chamdani, 2023).

Figure 6. Scout extracurricular activities

Scout extracurricular activities also serve as a means to cultivate a sense of tolerance among students. Scout activities provide significant opportunities for students to get to know each other because these activities prioritize togetherness. This has been proven to develop various attitudes, such as tolerance, discipline, and mutual respect (Harahap & Mutiara, 2024; Salim et al., 2024).

3.4 Elements of Morals Towards Nature

This element focuses on students who have a sense of responsibility, love, and care for the natural environment. In this element, students are developed to have an attitude of undertaking duties in preserving and conserving the environment as a creation of God. Students are also directed to cultivate a lifestyle that cares for the environment, actively contributing to environmental conservation. Some aspects developed in this element include understanding the interconnectedness of ecosystems and taking care of the natural environment. Various activities are designed for students to identify different creations of God, such as humans, animals, and plants. Additionally, students are encouraged to express gratitude for God's creations, recognizing that the existence of animals, plants, and humans is interconnected. This enables students to understand the interactions among each of God's creations.

Based on interviews with teachers, Phase A is primarily an introduction to the various creations of God, aiming to familiarize students with expressing gratitude for the fertile and prosperous natural environment and directing them to always preserve its sustainability. On the other hand, in Phase B, students are guided to understand the interconnectedness among different creations of God. Additionally, they are encouraged to adopt environmentally friendly practices and cease behaviors that harm the environment. Typically, teachers guide students in caring for the environment through activities such as communal service, class duties, and other initiatives aimed at environmental conservation. For instance, students are consistently directed to dispose of waste in designated bins, separating them according to their types, as a habitual practice in environmental care.

Figure 7. Community service activities

Participating in communal service and cleaning the school environment reflects the students' attitude towards nature. This demonstrates that students love and appreciate environmental cleanliness, making the learning environment comfortable for studying. Maintaining cleanliness is one of the means recommended by religion to preserve health. The Islamic stance on cleanliness is clear, and within it, there is devotion to God (Fatimah et al., 2022).

3.5 Elements of State Morals

This element focuses on students developing an understanding of their rights and duties as good Indonesian citizens and realizing their role as citizens. It shapes an attitude that prioritizes collective interests over personal ones. It teaches students to have a caring attitude, help others, engage in mutual cooperation, and prioritize deliberation in decision-making. Based on interviews with teachers, the development of national ethics involves familiarizing students with fulfilling their duties in school to subsequently obtain their rights. Additionally, the regular practice of flag-raising ceremonies every Monday and on national holidays is one of the ways to cultivate national ethics.

Figure 8. Ceremonial activities

Participating in ceremonies, commemorating national holidays, and singing patriotic songs are manifestations of the school's efforts to develop students' love for their country. Additionally,

cultivating an attitude of mutual respect among students aims to strengthen unity and harmony among the school community (Haqiem & Nawawi, 2023; Jiwangga, 2023; Juwandi et al., 2023).

The presence of good religious attitudes in elementary schools in Kebumen is a result of the efforts made by the schools. Interviews with teachers at the school provide insight into how the school develops the religious character of students. Various methods employed by the school in developing religious character in P5 include the story method, habituation method, and exemplification method. The story method is typically used by teachers to cultivate religious attitudes in students. This method is usually presented directly by the teacher in front of the class, recounting either real-life experiences or stories found in storybooks. Nur'aini and Rusadi explain that one effort in developing students' character education in Islamic Religious Education is through integration with the learning activities (Nur'aini et al., 2023; Rusadi, 2021). In addition to books, teachers often use various other media such as animated films, videos, and so on. Engaging stories provide additional knowledge for students that can be implemented in their daily lives. There are various books, videos, and animated films referenced by teachers to develop students' religious attitudes (Budiono, 2022; Muhammad et al., 2021). The use of varied media to tell exemplary stories makes students more attentive and fosters a deeper interest and curiosity in the narrative.

In addition to the story method, the habituation method proves to be an effective approach in shaping the religious attitudes of students. This method is most frequently used by teachers to instill attitudes in students. For example, habitual practices include communal prayers, communal service, reading before and after learning sessions, proper disposal of waste, charitable acts, implementing greetings, smiles, greetings, politeness, and courtesy program, and so on. These activities establish routines that students are required to perform daily. The habituation method aims to familiarize students with performing worship and other commendable activities, ensuring that the formed attitudes become ingrained in the students' personalities. The habituation method has proven effective in developing students' characters (Fatimah et al., 2022). Siswanto et al. state that the habituation method leaves a lasting impact on students and holds more significance (Siswanto et al., 2021). The habituation method is highly appropriate for developing students' religious characters and practicing the teachings of Islam correctly and effectively (Akhyar & Sutrawati, 2021). It is also explained that the habituation method can quickly foster the internalization of values through continuous and consistent implementation until the habit becomes ingrained in the students (Akhyar & Sutrawati, 2021).

The next method is exemplification. This method focuses on teachers and the entire school community setting a positive example. Particularly, teachers are obligated to set a good example for students as they interact with them the most. Exemplification by teachers involves demonstrating polite and courteous behavior, using proper language, actively participating in religious activities at school, and so on. The example set by teachers becomes a significant benchmark influencing the character development of students (Lestari et al., 2020). Just as explained by Mahmudiyah & Mulyadi, the formation of religious character can be accomplished by providing guidance and setting a good example (Mahmudiyah & Mulyadi, 2021).

The storytelling, habituation, and exemplification methods have great potential in the development of students' religious character. However, their success greatly depends on how these methods are applied and adapted to the existing context. Continuous critical reflection is necessary to ensure that the methods used are relevant, effective, and positively impactful for the students. Therefore, there is a need for improvement in the use of methods for religious character development. To optimize the development of religious character, the following are necessary: 1) Active Student Participation: Students should not only be passive recipients but must also actively engage in the learning process. For example, through discussions, role-playing, or group projects; 2) Parental Involvement: Parents play a crucial role in shaping the character of their children. Schools need to establish cooperation with parents to strengthen character education at home; and 3) Evaluation: Regular evaluations are necessary to assess how effective the methods used are in developing students' religious character.

4.   CONCLUSION

This study found that the religious attitudes of elementary students in Grades I and IV in Kebumen fall into the "very good" category, with indicator scores as follows: religious morality (88.75%), personal morality (88.50%), morality towards others (87.88%), morality towards nature (80.50%), and national ethics (88.00%). The schools effectively foster religious character within the P5 framework through the use of narrative storytelling, daily habituation, and teacher role-modeling. However, this research is limited in scope, focusing only on two grade levels within a single region, which may not fully represent broader educational contexts. Future studies are encouraged to expand the sample across different educational institutions and regions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' religious development. Additionally, researchers should explore other dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile to provide educators with a holistic framework for nurturing students' character, potential, and talents.

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