

# Enhancing Courtesy Ethics Among Grade VI Students Through Citizenship Education: A Case Study of State Elementary School Tamamaung 1, Makassar

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores how Citizenship Education (Civics) can improve students' ethical politeness in sixth grade at Tamamaung 1 Makassar Elementary School. The research addresses concerns about declining student manners, especially in interactions with teachers and peers. A qualitative descriptive approach was applied to gain an in-depth understanding of student behavior and teacher strategies. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation, then analyzed narratively to identify themes of polite and impolite conduct. Findings show that teachers regularly encourage polite behavior such as respectful communication, attentive listening, and tolerance. Yet, some students still display impolite behavior influenced by family background and social environment. Teachers modeled good manners and applied classroom routines, including the "5S" culture (smile, greet, polite, friendly, courteous). However, politeness was not explicitly integrated into lesson plans, as curriculum guidelines lacked specific indicators. Despite this limitation, students generally responded positively, showing improvements in greetings, cooperation, and respect for peers' opinions. The study concludes that Civics Education can foster ethical politeness when supported by consistent teacher modeling and reinforcement. Greater integration of character values into lesson planning is recommended to ensure sustained behavioral development in line with national education goals.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The primary mission of education is not only to develop students' intellectual capacity but also to nurture their moral, ethical, and social character. In the Indonesian context, this dual function is clearly articulated in the Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, which emphasizes that national education should aim to

develop learners into individuals who are faithful to God Almighty, noble in character, knowledgeable, and responsible citizens (Government of Indonesia, 1945/2002). This holistic vision underscores the importance of integrating character formation into the school curriculum from the earliest stages of education. At the elementary level, character education is particularly crucial since children are at a formative stage where values, attitudes, and behaviors begin to crystallize (Mulyasa, 2012).

One of the central components of character education in Indonesian schools is Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan (Civics Education, hereafter PKn). This subject plays a pivotal role in transmitting democratic values, fostering a sense of citizenship, and shaping students' ethical behavior (Winarno, 2013). PKn provides not only theoretical knowledge about rights and responsibilities but also a practical arena for cultivating respect, tolerance, honesty, and politeness (Susanto, 2013). These values are embedded in the philosophy of Pancasila, which serves as the foundation of Indonesian identity and nation-building. Therefore, PKn in elementary schools is expected to function as a medium for instilling civic virtues, including ethical politeness, which is considered an essential quality of Indonesian citizenship (Sapriya, 2012).

Politeness, or *kesantunan*, refers to the ability to interact with others in a respectful, considerate, and socially acceptable manner. It encompasses both verbal and nonverbal behavior, such as greeting, listening attentively, showing tolerance, and using appropriate language (Antoro, 2010). Politeness is not merely a social nicety; it reflects deeper moral values of empathy, humility, and mutual respect, which are indispensable for harmonious social interaction (Borba, 2008). At the elementary school level, politeness is both a marker of good character and a prerequisite for effective learning, as it contributes to positive classroom dynamics and respectful teacher–student relationships (Rusmini, 2012).

However, in recent years, concerns have been raised about the decline of polite behavior among Indonesian youth. Observations indicate that many students exhibit impolite behaviors such as disrespecting teachers, mocking peers, and using inappropriate language (Ratnasari, 2013). These tendencies are exacerbated by external influences, particularly the rapid spread of social media and digital technologies, which often expose children to uncensored communication styles and negative role models (Cornelia, Kusuma, & Dayu, 2022). Family background and community environment also play a significant role in shaping students' manners, with those from less supportive environments often displaying weaker ethical foundations (Suhandi, Dewi, & Furnamasari, 2022). This situation presents a pressing challenge for educators to reinforce ethical politeness within the structured framework of formal schooling.

Teachers are central agents in this process. As role models, they embody the values they seek to instill in students, and their behavior directly influences classroom norms (Supriyadi, 2019). When teachers consistently demonstrate respectful communication, fairness, and care, students are more likely to emulate these behaviors. In addition, teachers are responsible for designing learning activities that integrate character education into daily practice. However, research indicates that politeness education is often implemented informally or incidentally, without being systematically embedded in lesson plans or curriculum design (Bukoting, 2023). This lack of structured integration reduces the effectiveness of character formation, as students receive mixed signals about the importance of politeness relative to academic achievements.

The role of PKn in addressing this issue is particularly significant. As a subject that explicitly deals with civic values, PKn has the potential to serve as a structured platform for teaching politeness and other moral principles. Previous studies have highlighted that PKn fosters critical thinking, civic responsibility, and moral awareness when taught effectively (Wahab & Sapriya, 2011). Moreover, PKn emphasizes participatory and interactive pedagogies—such as group discussions, debates, and collaborative projects—that provide authentic opportunities for students to practice polite communication and respectful disagreement (Fathurrohman & Wuryandari, 2011). By embedding politeness as a core learning outcome within PKn, teachers can simultaneously achieve cognitive, affective, and behavioral goals of education.

Despite its potential, the implementation of politeness education through PKn faces several challenges. First, curriculum documents such as the Standar Kompetensi (SK) and Kompetensi Dasar (KD) often focus more heavily on knowledge outcomes, with limited explicit indicators for behavioral values (Majid, 2009). As a result, teachers may overlook politeness in their lesson planning, treating it as an incidental rather than a formalized objective (Hidayatullah, 2011). Second, the lack of training and resources for teachers reduces their ability to design creative and contextualized learning strategies that integrate politeness into PKn (Anita et al., 2008). Third, the assessment of politeness remains inconsistent, as teachers rarely use systematic tools to evaluate behavioral changes, relying instead on informal observations (Winarno, 2013).

Addressing these gaps requires a more intentional and structured approach. The integration of politeness into PKn should be guided by clear curricular indicators, supported by pedagogical strategies such as modeling, habituation, and reinforcement. Teachers should be encouraged to use real-life scenarios, role-playing, and collaborative activities to provide students with meaningful contexts for practicing polite behavior (Koesoema, 2010). Moreover, assessment practices must be expanded to include behavioral and attitudinal dimensions, ensuring that politeness is valued alongside cognitive achievement.

This study seeks to contribute to this discourse by examining how ethical politeness is fostered through PKn in the context of an elementary school in Makassar. Specifically, it focuses on the practices of sixth-grade teachers at Tamamaung 1 Elementary School, exploring how they design, implement, and assess PKn learning activities that incorporate polite values. The study also investigates students' responses to these practices, providing insights into the opportunities and challenges of integrating character education into everyday classroom interactions. By situating the findings within broader discussions of civic and character education, this research aims to highlight practical strategies for strengthening politeness education in Indonesian schools.

In sum, the introduction of politeness education within PKn is both a necessity and an opportunity. It is a necessity because of the growing concerns about declining student manners and the moral challenges posed by social change. It is an opportunity because PKn offers a structured framework for embedding civic and moral values into the formal curriculum. By examining the implementation of politeness education in a specific case study, this research provides evidence-based recommendations for improving teacher practices, curriculum design, and policy support. Ultimately, strengthening politeness education through PKn contributes not only to the development of individual character but also to the cultivation of responsible, respectful, and democratic citizens who embody the values of Pancasila.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, which is appropriate for exploring social phenomena in natural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of this design was to provide an in-depth understanding of how ethical politeness is fostered through Citizenship Education (PKn) in an elementary school setting. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to capture students' behaviors, teachers' strategies, and classroom dynamics as they occurred during learning activities.

### 2.2 Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at Tamamaung 1 Makassar Elementary School, located in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The participants were 32 sixth-grade students (17 female and 15 male) and two classroom teachers responsible for teaching PKn. Students were selected purposively because they were at a developmental stage where politeness is highly emphasized in both school and family environments. Teachers were included as key informants because of their role in designing and implementing PKn learning.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected from March to May 2021 using three main techniques:

1. Observation – Classroom observations were conducted during PKn lessons to record students' interactions, communication styles, and polite or impolite behaviors. An observation checklist and field notes were used to ensure consistency.
2. Interviews – Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and selected students. Teacher interviews focused on strategies used to integrate politeness into PKn, while student interviews explored their perceptions of polite behavior and classroom experiences.
3. Documentation – Relevant documents such as lesson plans (RPP), curriculum guidelines, and school regulations were analyzed to identify how politeness was formally addressed in planning.

### 2.4 Research Instruments

The instruments consisted of:

1. An observation guide with indicators such as greeting, listening attentively, respecting peers' opinions, and showing tolerance.
2. An interview guide with open-ended questions for teachers (e.g., "How do you integrate politeness values in PKn lessons?") and for students (e.g., "How do you show respect to your teachers and classmates?").
3. A document analysis form to capture references to politeness or character values in written materials.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection following the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes:

1. Data reduction – organizing and coding observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents into categories related to politeness.
2. Data display – summarizing findings in matrices and narrative descriptions to identify emerging themes.
3. Conclusion drawing and verification – interpreting patterns and verifying them through triangulation across sources (observation, interviews, documentation).

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were applied. Triangulation was used by comparing data from different techniques and participants. Member checking was conducted by confirming interview transcripts and interpretations with teachers. Prolonged engagement in the field allowed the researcher to build rapport and reduce bias. Finally, an audit trail was maintained through systematic documentation of data collection and analysis processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Findings

#### 3.1.1 Citizenship Education Learning in Elementary Schools

The findings show that students at Tamamaung 1 Makassar Elementary School display mixed levels of politeness in classroom interactions. While many students greet their teachers, listen attentively, and show respect toward peers, several others still exhibit impolite behaviors such as mocking classmates, interrupting discussions, or speaking disrespectfully to teachers.

Interviews with teachers indicated that politeness has been consistently emphasized in Citizenship Education (PKn) lessons through classroom routines, moral reminders, and teacher modeling. However, the impact is uneven due to external influences such as family background and neighborhood environment. Teachers noted that students from supportive family settings demonstrated better manners than those who lacked parental guidance.

Document analysis further revealed that politeness was not explicitly included in lesson plans (RPP) or the Standar Kompetensi (SK) and Kompetensi Dasar (KD). Instead, politeness education was implemented informally during classroom interactions. For instance, teachers corrected impolite behaviors on the spot and reinforced positive behaviors through praise or encouragement.

Student responses to these efforts were generally positive. Many students began to adopt polite habits such as asking permission before leaving the classroom, raising hands before speaking, listening to peers' opinions, and showing tolerance in group work. Table 1 illustrates examples of teacher strategies and corresponding student responses.

**Table 1.** Application of Ethical Politeness in the Classroom

Teacher's role in modeling politeness	Student responses
Greeting teachers and friends	Students return greetings
Giving praise for achievements	Students feel motivated
Encouraging respect for parents	Students show obedience
Explaining lessons patiently	Students listen attentively
Teaching respect for differences	Students demonstrate tolerance
Modeling mutual respect	Students respect one another

### 3.1.2 The Role of Teachers in Shaping Student Politeness

The findings reveal that teachers play a central and irreplaceable role in shaping students' ethical politeness during classroom learning. Observations demonstrated that teachers did not merely deliver content but also acted as behavioral models for their students. One of the key strategies observed was the consistent application of the "5S" culture—smile, greet, polite, friendly, and courteous—which was embedded into daily classroom routines. This approach created a supportive environment in which students were consistently reminded to demonstrate respect through simple, repeated actions such as greeting peers and teachers, speaking in a friendly tone, and practicing courtesy in interactions.

Teachers also corrected impolite behavior immediately when it appeared in the classroom. For example, when a student mocked a classmate or interrupted a discussion, the teacher intervened directly, labeling the behavior as inappropriate and reminding students of the value of respect. This immediate feedback helped reinforce behavioral expectations and showed students that politeness was not optional but a necessary part of classroom life. Teachers further encouraged cooperative learning by assigning group tasks and emphasizing respect for diverse opinions. Through these activities, students were given opportunities to practice tolerance and mutual respect in authentic learning situations.

However, the study also found limitations in how teachers assessed politeness. While teachers consistently monitored students' behavior, their assessments were largely informal. Most evaluations were based on personal observations, and documentation of behavioral progress was rarely completed. As a result, the development of politeness was not systematically tracked over time. Teachers often made notes only when extreme behaviors occurred, such as open disrespect or conflict among students. This practice meant that subtle but important improvements in students' everyday politeness were not formally recorded, reducing the ability to evaluate long-term character development.

Despite these limitations, teachers' personal initiatives proved crucial in compensating for curricular gaps. Citizenship Education (PKn) lessons did not explicitly include politeness as an

indicator in the official syllabus or lesson plans. Nevertheless, teachers took the initiative to incorporate values of politeness into classroom practices, ensuring that students were still exposed to moral guidance. These findings suggest that while PKn has the potential to serve as a structured platform for instilling politeness, its implementation at the school level remains highly dependent on teachers' discretion and commitment. Without formal integration into lesson planning and structured assessment, the outcomes of politeness education risk being inconsistent and unsustainable.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study illustrate both the potential and the limitations of Citizenship Education (*Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan* or PKn) in promoting politeness among elementary students. At its core, PKn is designed as a moral and civic education subject that seeks to shape students into responsible citizens with strong character (Susanto, 2013). However, the study shows that despite this overarching purpose, the absence of explicit indicators for politeness in the curriculum undermines the consistency and effectiveness of its implementation. This section discusses the strengths observed in PKn practices, the role of teachers as moral exemplars, the challenges posed by limited assessment, the influence of external environments, and the implications for broader theories of character education.

### **Strengths of Citizenship Education**

PKn remains a central vehicle for embedding civic and moral values in Indonesian education. As Susanto (2013) highlighted, the subject aims to develop moral character, civic responsibility, and democratic participation. In practice, the teachers in this study integrated politeness into daily classroom routines, even though it was not formally stated in the lesson plan. These incidental practices illustrate the adaptability of PKn as a framework for addressing contemporary challenges in student behavior.

This finding resonates with Bukoting (2023), who reported that politeness education in many Indonesian schools tends to be delivered informally, relying on teachers' initiatives rather than systematic curricular design. While this approach can foster flexibility and responsiveness, it also risks inconsistency across classrooms and schools. Nevertheless, the adaptability of PKn demonstrates its potential as a platform for moral instruction, particularly when teachers creatively use daily interactions to reinforce values of respect, tolerance, and courtesy.

### **Teachers as Moral Exemplars**

Teachers' role as moral exemplars emerged as one of the most significant findings. Classroom observations revealed that teachers not only instructed students but also modeled respectful communication and polite conduct. This finding aligns with Supriyadi (2019), who argued that students learn values primarily through imitation of teachers' behavior rather than through abstract instruction.

The positive student responses observed in this study further support Borba's (2008) argument that moral intelligence develops through consistent exposure to positive examples. When teachers consistently demonstrated politeness—whether by greeting students, listening attentively, or correcting impolite language—students began to replicate these behaviors. The adoption of the "5S" culture (smile, greet, polite, friendly, and courteous) in classroom routines provided a concrete example of how habits can be cultivated through repetition. Norbay (2017) similarly found that habituation strategies in schools can successfully foster politeness and respectful attitudes when reinforced daily.

### **Weaknesses in Assessment Practices**

Despite these positive outcomes, a significant limitation observed in this study was the lack of structured assessment for politeness. Teachers primarily relied on informal observations and rarely maintained systematic records of students' behavioral progress. This practice meant that only extreme cases of impoliteness were documented, while more subtle improvements often went unnoticed.

As Winarno (2013) emphasized, effective character formation requires systematic assessment of affective outcomes alongside cognitive and psychomotor domains. Without formal evaluation tools such as rubrics, checklists, or behavior logs, politeness education risks being overshadowed by subjects that yield easily measurable academic achievements. Furthermore, the absence of clear indicators makes it difficult to hold schools accountable for students' moral development, thus limiting the institutional priority given to politeness education.

### **Environmental Influences on Politeness**

Another finding of this study is the significant role of external influences—particularly family background, community environment, and digital exposure—in shaping student behavior. Students with supportive families who reinforced polite communication at home tended to exhibit respectful behaviors in school. In contrast, those exposed to unsupervised social media use or less structured family environments were more likely to display impolite conduct.

This observation is consistent with Cornelia, Kusuma, and Dayu (2022), who argued that external environments strongly shape children's politeness and overall moral development. The implication is that schools alone cannot bear full responsibility for character education. A collaborative approach involving parents, communities, and educators is necessary to ensure that consistent moral guidance is provided across different contexts of children's lives.

### **Implications for Character Education Theory**

The findings also provide insight into broader theories of character education. Marzuki (2011) proposed that character development follows a three-step progression: *knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good*. Evidence from this study suggests that PKn introduces students to values (knowing), motivates them through teacher praise and reinforcement (loving), and provides opportunities for practice through classroom routines (doing).

However, the transition from occasional practice to ingrained habit remains incomplete. This limitation highlights the need for systematic reinforcement and intentional curriculum design. As Lickona (1991) argued, character education is most effective when it integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions in a sustained and holistic manner. Without structured support, the values introduced in PKn may remain superficial and fail to become lasting aspects of students' character.

### **Toward a More Systematic Approach**

The results suggest that Citizenship Education at Tamamaung 1 Makassar Elementary School has clear potential for fostering politeness but requires more intentional implementation. Embedding politeness explicitly within PKn lesson plans would provide teachers with clearer guidance and ensure that values are systematically addressed. Structured assessment tools would enable schools to track progress, evaluate effectiveness, and provide feedback to students and parents. Furthermore, collaboration with families and communities would extend the reach of politeness education beyond the classroom, creating consistency across children's learning environments.

In summary, this study confirms that PKn holds a vital role in promoting politeness among elementary students, but its success depends heavily on teachers' personal initiatives and contextual factors. The absence of explicit curricular indicators and systematic assessment limits the sustainability of politeness education. However, the commitment of teachers as role models and the positive student responses demonstrate that meaningful progress is possible. By combining intentional curriculum design, structured evaluation, and strong school-community partnerships, politeness can move from being an incidental outcome of classroom routines to a central objective of civic education.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study found that Citizenship Education (PKn) at Tamamaung 1 Makassar Elementary School holds significant potential for fostering students' politeness, primarily through teachers' role modeling, immediate correction of impolite behaviors, and the habituation of daily routines such as the 5S culture. Nevertheless, the absence of explicit curricular indicators and structured assessment tools limited the consistency and sustainability of these efforts, while external factors such as family background and exposure to social media further influenced student behavior. These findings suggest that politeness education remains largely incidental and dependent on teachers' discretion rather than being systematically integrated into PKn lesson planning. The study's limitations lie in its narrow focus on a single school and reliance on qualitative observation, which restrict generalizability. Future research should employ multi-site studies and mixed-method approaches to capture broader patterns, while also exploring innovative assessment models and stronger school-community partnerships to ensure that politeness becomes a measurable and sustainable dimension of civic education.

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