

The Role of Pancasila Education in Shaping Democratic Awareness of Vocational High School Students

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Submitted: March 14, 2026. Revised: May 10, 2026. Accepted: May 13, 2026.

Publish: May 15, 2026

Abstract

Background - Democratic awareness is a core outcome of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn), yet vocational high school students in Indonesia still display a gap between understanding democratic concepts and practising them beyond the classroom, while their exposure to political information on social media grows faster than their capacity to evaluate it critically.

Research Objective - This study aims to analyse empirically the role of Pancasila Education learning in shaping the democratic awareness of tenth-grade students at SMKN 1 Sampang, focusing on the learning process, the internalisation of democratic values, and democratic practices within the school environment.

Research Methodology - The study adopted a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey design. All 68 tenth-grade students of two study programmes, Fabrication Engineering (36 students) and Electronics Engineering (32 students), were involved through total sampling. Data were collected using a closed questionnaire of 25 items on a five-point Likert scale measuring the role of Pancasila Education learning and the level of democratic awareness. The instrument was tested for validity through item-total correlation and for reliability through Cronbach's alpha, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson product-moment correlation test.

Research Result - Most students demonstrated a good understanding of democratic principles, citizens' rights and obligations, and the importance of deliberation in decision-making: 81% mastered basic democratic concepts and 89% reported improved understanding of their civic rights and responsibilities. However, while 75% were interested in democratic activities at school, only 48% took part in social organisations outside the classroom, and only 55% of the 70% who obtained political information from social media were able to evaluate it critically. Discussion, case study, and deliberation simulation were perceived as more effective than conventional lectures, and the correlation between the quality of Pancasila Education learning and democratic awareness was strong and positive ($r = 0.64$). Limited instructional time and the inconsistent use of interactive methods remained the main obstacles.

Research Conclusion -Pancasila Education contributes significantly to the democratic awareness of vocational students, but that awareness is still largely confined to the school environment. Strengthening participatory learning strategies and systematically integrating digital media literacy are required to translate democratic understanding into democratic practice.

Research Novelty/ Contribution - The study provides empirical evidence on democratic awareness in a vocational school setting, a context rarely examined in Pancasila Education research, and proposes the integration of participatory civic learning with digital literacy as a contextual model connecting formal civic instruction with the participatory learning principles developed in nonformal education.

Keywords: Pancasila Education, Democratic Awareness, Civic Participation, Digital Literacy, Vocational High School Students

Recommended citation:

Pradana, F., Muzekki, S., & Januar, L. R. (2026). The role of Pancasila education in shaping democratic awareness of class X students of SMKN 1 Sampang. *Edukasi*, 20(1), 25-38.
<https://doi.org/10.15294/edukasi.v20i1.45743>

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the character and personality of citizens, including fostering students' democratic awareness from an early stage within the school environment. Within the framework of Indonesia's national education system, Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) is designed as a fundamental subject aimed at developing intelligent, responsible, and democratically oriented citizens. Pancasila Education is not merely limited to the transmission of constitutional and governmental knowledge; it also serves as a medium for internalising democratic values, promoting active participation, strengthening legal awareness, and fostering respect for diversity as the practical implementation of Pancasila values in everyday life. In the context of increasingly complex social dynamics, the younger generation faces various challenges in practising democratic life, such as limited participation in decision-making processes, low awareness of shared norms and regulations, and a weak culture of deliberation within the school environment. Democratic awareness encompasses not only cognitive understanding of democratic concepts but also moral responsibility and active participation in democratic practices within society. Therefore, civic education plays an important role in fostering students' political awareness, participation, and democratic attitudes through participatory and deliberative learning processes (Sihombing et al., 2022). Without the development of such awareness from an early stage, students may potentially become passive citizens who lack social responsibility in social and national life.

The formation of democratic character is not confined to formal schooling. Purbiyanto et al. (2025) show that strategies applied by working families, such as the deliberate use of quality time and the involvement of the wider social environment, are decisive in internalising Pancasila values from early childhood, while Edy et al. (2025) demonstrate that a constructivist approach in nonformal education settings can develop Pancasila leadership character through experience-based learning. Jannah et al. (2026) further illustrate, through participatory action research with community facilitators, that civic capacity grows when learners are positioned as actors rather than recipients. Recent Indonesian evidence points in the same direction: Saputra et al. (2026) show that a dynamic learning model strengthens children's character education, while Oktovian et al. (2026) demonstrate that local-wisdom-based learning media foster students' character development. These findings position Pancasila Education as a continuum connecting family, school, and community, and they underline the importance of learning designs that give students authentic experiences rather than transmitted knowledge alone.

Pancasila Education functions as a key instrument in equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to support democratic life. Through participatory learning models, such as group discussions, deliberation simulations, and student organisation elections, democratic values can be internalised contextually through meaningful learning experiences. Noviani and Muthi (2025) emphasise that group discussion-based learning in PPKn is effective in enhancing students' active participation and confidence in expressing their opinions. This finding is further supported by Pradesa (2020), who states that democratic-based PPKn learning contributes to

improving legal awareness and fostering responsible attitudes among tenth-grade students. Irvansyah et al. (2026) add that dialogic communication in community learning centres improves the depth of learners' engagement, indicating that dialogue itself, and not only the topic being discussed, is a determinant of learning quality.

Furthermore, the integration of democratic values into Pancasila Education has been shown to have a positive impact on the development of democratic character among young people. Widiawati et al. (2025) argue that the implementation of democratic values in Pancasila Education contributes to strengthening students' freedom of expression, tolerance, and participatory attitudes in school life. Democratic practices in schools, such as the election of the student council president (OSIS), serve as concrete learning opportunities for students to understand their rights, obligations, and democratic decision-making processes. Sumerta et al. (2025) found that participation in OSIS organisational activities and elections contributes to strengthening students' democratic attitudes and leadership character through direct democratic experiences at school.

At the Vocational High School (SMK) level, the role of Pancasila Education becomes increasingly crucial, as students are being prepared to enter the workforce and broader social environments. In addition to possessing vocational competencies, SMK students are also expected to develop strong civic awareness. Santoso and Baihaqi (2025) emphasise that PPKn learning plays an important role in strengthening civic literacy, democratic awareness, and students' participation skills through contextual learning approaches in vocational education. Readiness for the world of work is itself closely associated with students' confidence in their own capabilities: Nabilah and Ulya (2025) report that self-efficacy accounts for a substantial share of the variance in the work readiness of vocational students, while Ardyanti et al. (2026) show that project-based learning media can strengthen the cognitive scaffolding of vocational students. In the same vein, Sudiyarti et al. (2026) report that STEM-integrated project-based learning improves both creative thinking and learning independence among vocational students, and Rofahiyah and Ulya (2026) identify a competency gap that experiential learning in student organisations is well placed to address. Deliberative and participatory civic learning therefore serves a double purpose, strengthening both democratic disposition and the collaborative confidence that vocational graduates require.

International evidence situates these Indonesian findings within a wider debate. In a meta-analysis of research on young people, digital media, and engagement, Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) report a generally positive but modest association between digital media use and civic-political engagement, echoing the earlier meta-analysis by Boulianne (2015). Exposure alone, however, is insufficient. Kahne and Bowyer (2017) found that political knowledge did not improve young people's judgements of the accuracy of online political claims, whereas exposure to media literacy education did. Taken together, these studies suggest that democratic awareness in the digital era depends less on how much political information students encounter than on whether they have been taught to interrogate it.

Beyond the classroom, the wider educational ecosystem also shapes how civic and social competencies are formed. Shofwan et al. (2025) show that empowering tutors within the non-

formal education ecosystem through digital multimodal models strengthens learners' independence, and Hardiyanti et al. (2025) demonstrate that the quality of equality education programmes in community learning centres depends on continuous evaluation of access and learning processes. These studies indicate that participatory and contextual learning principles are transferable across formal and non-formal settings, and that the school is only one of several arenas in which democratic habits are cultivated.

Although various studies have demonstrated the positive contribution of Pancasila Education in fostering democratic awareness, its implementation still faces several challenges, including the limited use of varied teaching methods, low student learning motivation, and the lack of optimal integration of democratic values within school culture. Therefore, more specific empirical studies in particular educational institutions are needed to gain a deeper understanding of how Pancasila Education contributes to the development of students' democratic awareness.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyse the influence of Pancasila Education in shaping the democratic awareness of tenth-grade students at SMKN 1 Sampang. The focus of this research is directed at the learning process, value internalisation, and democratic practices within the school environment that contribute to the development of participatory, tolerant, and responsible attitudes as manifestations of democratic awareness. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Pancasila Education studies and practical recommendations for improving the quality of PPKn learning at the vocational high school level.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach aimed at describing and analysing the extent to which Pancasila Education contributes to the development of democratic awareness among tenth-grade students at SMKN 1 Sampang. This approach was selected because it allows data to be presented systematically, objectively, and measurably regarding students' levels of understanding, attitudes, and participation in democratic values after participating in Pancasila Education learning activities. The research design used is a survey, with data collected through the distribution of questionnaires to selected respondents. The survey method is considered effective for obtaining direct information from students regarding their learning experiences, their perceptions of instructional strategies, and the level of democratic awareness they possess.

Participants/study group

The research population consists of all tenth-grade students of SMKN 1 Sampang in the 2026 academic year. The study focuses on two study programmes, namely Fabrication Engineering (TF 2), consisting of 36 students, and Electronics Engineering (TE), consisting of 32 students, resulting in a total of 68 respondents. The selection of tenth-grade students is based on the consideration that at this level students begin to receive Pancasila Education materials covering democratic values, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and deliberative practices within the context of school life. The sampling technique used is total sampling, in which all members of the population in the two classes were selected as research respondents. This technique was chosen

because the population size is relatively small, allowing the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive representation of the empirical conditions in the field.

Data Collection Processes

The research instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire employing a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, designed to measure two main variables: the role of Pancasila Education learning (variable X) and the level of students' democratic awareness (variable Y). The instrument consists of 25 statement items representing indicators of democratic understanding, participation, tolerance, responsibility, and confidence in expressing opinions. Data collection was carried out through the direct distribution of questionnaires in the classroom with the assistance of the researcher. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were provided with an explanation of the research objectives and assurances regarding the confidentiality of the data provided. This step was taken to maintain objectivity and to encourage students to provide honest responses.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The collected data were processed using statistical software to calculate percentages, mean scores, and frequency distributions of responses. The Pearson product-moment correlation test was then used to identify the relationship between the quality of Pancasila Education learning and the level of students' democratic awareness. The results of the descriptive analysis are presented as proportions of respondents for each indicator, while the correlation coefficient is interpreted to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables.

Credibility and Ethics

Prior to its implementation, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure its feasibility and consistency as a research measurement tool. The validity test was conducted by analysing the correlation between each item score and the total score, while reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results indicate that all items were valid and obtained reliability values above 0.70, indicating that the instrument has good internal consistency. Participation in the study was voluntary, respondents were informed of the purpose of the research beforehand, and all responses were treated anonymously and used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This study involved 68 tenth-grade students of SMKN 1 Sampang, consisting of 36 students from the Fabrication Engineering programme (TF 2) and 32 students from the Electronics Engineering programme (TE). The majority of respondents, namely 97%, stated that they had actively participated in Pancasila Education learning for one semester. In addition, 81% of students demonstrated a good understanding of basic democratic concepts, including citizens' rights and

obligations, deliberation principles, equality before the law, and the Indonesian governmental system, whereas 19% still showed relatively limited understanding, particularly regarding the implementation of democratic values in daily life and formal decision-making mechanisms.

Students' democratic awareness was also reflected in their participation in classroom deliberations, class leader elections, and discussions of national issues. The results show that 75% of students are interested in participating in democratic activities at school, yet only 48% are actively involved in social activities or organisations outside the classroom. The evaluation of learning effectiveness shows that 89% of respondents experienced an improvement in understanding their rights and responsibilities as citizens after participating in Pancasila Education, with group discussion, case studies, and deliberation simulations regarded as the most effective methods.

The Pearson correlation test produced a coefficient of 0.64 between the quality of Pancasila Education learning and students' democratic awareness, indicating a strong and positive relationship. Regarding information sources, about 70% of respondents obtain information on democratic issues through social media, but only 55% are able to evaluate such information critically. In terms of implementation constraints, 34% of students stated that the allocation of learning time is insufficient for discussing current issues in depth, while 40% stated that discussion methods are not consistently applied.

DISCUSSION

The finding that most students master basic democratic concepts is in line with Mazid et al. (2024), who emphasise that Pancasila Education contributes to strengthening democratic awareness through the reinforcement of civic values. This is further supported by Marshanda et al. (2025), who found that project-based learning enhances student engagement and critical thinking in understanding democratic values. The 19% of students with limited understanding indicates that mastery of democratic concepts does not depend solely on cognitive aspects but also on the continuous internalisation of values within the school environment. Agus et al. (2025) emphasise that civic education in the digital era plays an important role in transforming awareness into more active participatory behaviour.

From the perspective of Pancasila Education, democratic awareness is not only understood as knowledge of political and governmental systems, but also as character formation that upholds deliberation, responsibility, and active participation. These values are aligned with the fourth principle of Pancasila, which emphasises deliberative democracy. This is consistent with Hajari et al. (2023), who state that collaborative learning strengthens democratic civic education, and with Edy et al. (2025), whose constructivist model shows that Pancasila character is formed most durably when learners construct meaning through direct experience rather than receiving normative explanations.

The gap between the 75% of students interested in democratic activities at school and the 48% who participate outside it indicates a distance between conceptual understanding and the

practical application of democracy in social life. Sadeli (2025) states that students' civic participation remains limited to formal educational settings, while Hudiarini and Lova (2025) highlight the importance of digital civic literacy in expanding democratic awareness in the social media era. Jannah et al. (2026) show that participatory action research can convert community members into active facilitators, which suggests that widening the arena of student participation to community-based activities may be an effective way of closing this gap. In vocational education contexts, such widening is particularly relevant because students are prepared for a workplace that requires collaboration and collective decision-making; Coopmans et al. (2023) emphasise the importance of critical civic education in vocational education, and Nabilah and Ulya (2025) show that students' confidence in their own capabilities significantly predicts their readiness to enter the world of work. The international literature offers a similar caution: Boulianne (2015) finds that the association between social media use and participation is positive but modest, Binder et al. (2021) show that young people may be politically dealigned yet remain mobilisable through issue-based engagement, and Suni and Mietola (2023) demonstrate that youth participation is frequently constrained by the adult-defined structures within which it is invited to take place.

The perceived effectiveness of discussion, case studies, and deliberation simulations corresponds with Madhakomala et al. (2025), who show that collaborative and inquiry-based learning provides a foundation for critical, creative, and solution-oriented thinking and can significantly improve democratic awareness. Irvansyah et al. (2026) similarly find that dialogic communication increases the quality of engagement in community learning centres, reinforcing the argument that deliberative interaction is the mechanism through which civic dispositions are formed rather than a supplementary classroom activity.

Adaptive and collaborative learning approaches play an important role in creating a more inclusive, interactive, and student-centred learning environment. Through these approaches, learning is not only focused on knowledge transfer but also provides space for students to interact, discuss, and construct knowledge collectively. Wasni et al. (2024) emphasise that learning motivation and self-efficacy significantly affect student learning outcomes, and Hanaris (2023) adds that variations of interactive learning methods can enhance students' motivation and self-efficacy. Comparable evidence from nonformal settings reinforces this pattern: Ilyas et al. (2025) found that a multimodal-based learning model increased learners' creativity in equality education, Shofwan and Gupta (2026) reported that a multimodal module enhanced learners' digital business creativity, and Ardyanti et al. (2026) demonstrated that project-based learning media improve the cognitive scaffolding of vocational students. Najwa et al. (2026) similarly show that the quality of peer relationships is a determinant of learning motivation, which underlines the social dimension of the discussion-based methods valued by respondents in this study. Taken together, these findings indicate that multimodal and participatory designs raise engagement across educational subsystems.

Theoretically, discussion-based and simulation-based democratic learning enables the simultaneous development of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition. Students not only

understand concepts but also develop communication skills, tolerance, and decision-making abilities. This positions Pancasila Education as a medium for developing a democratic culture in schools. Sembiring and Ndona (2025) emphasise that the integration of technology in learning further strengthens student engagement, and Shofwan et al. (2025) show that empowering educators with digital multimodal capacity is a precondition for such integration to function as intended.

The correlation coefficient of 0.64 suggests that better learning quality is associated with higher levels of democratic awareness among students. Putri et al. (2024) state that effective civic education strengthens students' democratic values, while Acep and Abdurahman (2026) emphasise that civic education in the digital era contributes to the development of democratic character. The strength of this association also implies that improvements in instructional quality, rather than an increase in instructional hours alone, are likely to produce the largest gains in democratic awareness.

The gap between the 70% of students who obtain political information from social media and the 55% who can evaluate it critically indicates that students' digital literacy still requires strengthening. Umam (2025) emphasises that digital civic education is essential in developing students' democratic competencies in the information era. This finding is consistent with Zidni and Ekarini (2025), who report that vocational students with a stronger grasp of digital ethics behave more responsibly on social media, whereas those with limited understanding are more easily influenced by their surrounding environment, and with Hadiyanti et al. (2026), who show that social media exposure interacts with the family environment in shaping adolescents' behaviour. Puspoko Jati et al. (2025) further show that platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube can be optimised as instruments of character education based on local wisdom rather than being treated merely as sources of distraction, while Firdaus et al. (2026) demonstrate that a project-based learning model is effective in productive digital literacy training. Comparable international findings sharpen this argument. Swart (2023) shows that young people do possess news-literacy knowledge but apply it selectively, depending on the social context of use, and Tamboer et al. (2022) report that early adolescents define news and news literacy in their own terms rather than in the terms schools employ. Manca et al. (2021) therefore argue for a glocal approach in which social media literacy is developed through locally meaningful practice rather than generic instruction, while Chen (2021) shows cross-culturally that the benefit of social media use for adolescents' digital reading literacy is mediated by self-regulated learning. Kahne and Bowyer (2017) provide the most directly classroom-relevant evidence: media literacy education, and not political knowledge, improved young people's judgements of the accuracy of online political claims. At the same time, Siddiq and Scherer (2019) caution in their meta-analysis that ICT literacy is unevenly distributed among students, so digital literacy instruction must be designed to narrow rather than reproduce existing gaps. In the Indonesian context, Syah (2026) demonstrates that a needs-based digital literacy module developed with the UTAUT framework can address these competencies systematically. Taken together, these studies suggest that social media should be

positioned as a learning medium within Pancasila Education, accompanied by explicit instruction in digital ethics, source verification, and productive content creation.

Although Pancasila Education is generally considered effective, several implementation challenges remain. The 34% of students reporting insufficient learning time and the 40% reporting inconsistent use of discussion methods are consistent with Puspitarini (2023), who found that limited learning time hinders the optimisation of reflection and discussion in the learning process. Evidence from equality education programmes points in a similar direction: Hardiyanti et al. (2025) note that access alone does not guarantee learning quality unless programme implementation is systematically evaluated, an argument that applies equally to the delivery of Pancasila Education in vocational schools.

CONCLUSION

This study illustrates the role of Pancasila Education learning in shaping the democratic awareness of tenth-grade students at SMKN 1 Sampang. This is reflected in students' understanding of democratic values, their involvement in deliberative activities, and their attitudes toward respecting differences of opinion within the school environment. Pancasila Education learning contributes significantly to improving students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens while fostering awareness of the importance of participation in democratic life, and the strong positive correlation between learning quality and democratic awareness indicates that the quality of instruction, rather than its duration alone, is the decisive factor.

Nevertheless, democratic awareness among these students remains largely school-bound, and their capacity to evaluate political information circulating on social media is still limited. Further reinforcement is therefore necessary through more interactive, contextual, and participatory learning strategies, such as group discussions, deliberation simulations, and case studies, and through the systematic integration of digital media literacy into Pancasila Education. Extending democratic practice into community-based activities, following the participatory principles developed in nonformal education, offers a promising avenue for closing the gap between civic understanding and civic action. Future research is recommended to extend the analysis to multiple vocational schools and to examine the longer-term effect of participatory civic learning on students' actual civic participation after graduation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors declare that there are no external contributors who are not listed as co-authors in this study, as all authors collaboratively participated in all stages of the research process, including data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation. The authors also thank the

principal, teachers, and tenth-grade students of SMKN 1 Sampang for their participation and support during data collection.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This research was funded through personal contributions from each author. No external funding or institutional grants were received for the conduct of this study.

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