



## Formation of Students' Social Ethics Through Social Science Learning at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 4 Cirebon

Amal Rizqi Aziz<sup>1</sup>✉, Wasino<sup>2</sup>, Muh. Sholeh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SMAN 4 Cirebon, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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### Abstract

The rapid advancement of information technology in the globalization era has significantly influenced teenagers' social interactions, particularly students at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon. The widespread use of social media and digital platforms presents challenges in fostering social ethics among students. This study aims to develop an effective model for social ethics formation through Social Sciences (IPS) learning and to analyze the role of learning methods such as class discussions and experiential projects in integrating social ethical values into students' daily lives. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observations and in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and school administrators. Findings reveal that a collaborative approach between teachers and students, supported by the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Program (P5/P5 Student Profile Strengthening Program), effectively promotes social ethical values. Among the methods, project-based learning and class discussions are most effective in instilling tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility. This research contributes novelty by integrating social ethics within formal education, offering practical insights for character education strategies applicable to educators and policymakers.

✉ Correspondence address:

Jl. Perjuangan No.01, Kecamatan Kesambi, Kota Cirebon

E-mail: [amalrizqiaziz6@students.unnes.ac.id](mailto:amalrizqiaziz6@students.unnes.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the rapid progress of information technology has brought about significant changes in the social interactions of teenagers, especially among high school students (Hardiyanto, *et al.*, 2023). Social media and digital platforms have become the primary means for students to communicate, interact, and express themselves. (Rohmatillah *et al.*, 2024). Although these platforms provide many benefits, they also pose major challenges in the formation of students' social ethics and character. Schools, as formal educational institutions, play an important role not only in providing academic education but also in instilling social and moral values. (Picciotto, 2021).

Previous research provides evidence that character education has an important role. main in the formation of every responsible and ethical person. Kamaruddin, (2012) emphasizes that character education is a planned and conscious effort to educate and develop students' potential. In addition, research by Sagita, *et al.* (2023) shows that the use of project-based learning in social studies subjects plays a significant role in strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile and strengthening the social ethics aspect in character education. The main objective of this study is to develop an effective social studies learning model in forming students' social ethics at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon, while testing the influence of various learning methods on strengthening these characters. Therefore, this study aims to bridge these differences and ensure the formation of sustainable social ethics at all levels.

This study will also use symbolic interactionism theory to understand how students develop their understanding of social ethics through social interactions in the classroom, where social symbols (such as language, actions, and values) become the basis for the formation of their social meanings and behaviors. (Blumer, 1986). Many studies focus more on character education in general and not many have explored how social ethics can be integrated through social studies learning (Fitria, *et al.* 2018).

In fact, social studies subjects have great potential to become a forum for teaching broader social ethical values. (Yunanto & Kasanova, 2023).

In Indonesia, academic achievement is often

prioritized over character building. (Safitri *et al.*, 2022), so this creates a gap that needs to be filled by further research. Previous studies that use the symbolic interactionism perspective, such as research (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006) about moral education in secondary schools, as well as analysis (Tsang, 2012) related to emotional management in the teaching process, provides a strong framework for understanding the dynamics of the formation of students' social ethics through classroom interactions.

In addition, a systematic review by (Husin *et al.*, 2021) shows that this theory is increasingly being applied in educational and social research as an effective data analysis tool to uncover social meanings constructed in the context of education. The use of symbolic interactionism theory in this study is expected to provide deeper insight into the process of forming students' social ethics through social studies learning at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon aims to develop an effective model for forming social ethics among high school students, through the application of Social Sciences (IPS). This model is expected to be a reference for other schools facing similar challenges. The integration of social ethics into formal education through IPS is very important in forming people who excel academically and are morally and ethically responsible in their social interactions (Iasha, 2022).

The study has several objectives. First, to identify and analyze how the formation of social ethics is carried out through social studies learning at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon. Second, to determine the most effective social studies learning model in promoting social ethics among students. Third, to find supporting and inhibiting components in the process of forming social ethics through social studies education.

## METHOD

The purpose of this study was to study the understanding of the phenomenon of the formation of students' social ethics in Social Sciences (IPS) lessons at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon. Qualitative research was chosen because this approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of behavior, perceptions, and describe in detail how socio-educational interactions and dynamics play a

role in character education and social ethics in schools (Karyono, *et al*, 2019).

The stages in this research begin with observations of the school environment, learning process, and interactions between teachers and students inside and outside the classroom. This study involved a total of 8 informants, consisting of the principal, 3 social studies teachers, 2 students of grades X and XI from various social backgrounds, and 2 vice principals for curriculum and student affairs. The selection of informants was carried out purposively based on their active involvement in the social studies learning process and character building activities at school. The data collected from the results of observations and interviews were then analyzed systematically through thematic analysis techniques, where relevant data were classified according to the themes that emerged. Furthermore, the results of this analysis will be integrated with existing theories to provide a more comprehensive picture of the formation of students' social ethics. SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon was chosen as the research location because it has a rich curriculum with extracurricular programs that can support the formation of students' character.

Primary and secondary data were collected in this study. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observation, while secondary data came from school documents, curriculum, and relevant learning materials. Data collection was carried out intensively by utilizing various sources of information to ensure accuracy, validity of findings, maintain the validity of data, and triangulation methods were used to ensure consistency and credibility of research results.

Data analysis is an ongoing process that begins with data collection, continues with data reduction to distinguish relevant information, narrative presentation, and drawing conclusions (Martanto, *et al*, 2021). This study uses symbolic interactionism theory as a conceptual basis in understanding the process of forming students' social ethics. This theory allows researchers to examine how social symbols—such as language, actions, and values—are constructed and negotiated through social interactions in the classroom (Afina, *et al*, 2024). Therefore, data analysis focuses on the meaning given by students and teachers to their

learning experiences and to reveal the process of forming social ethical meaning dynamically and contextually in the social studies education environment.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to identify effective learning methods in shaping students' social ethics through Social Sciences (IPS) subjects at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon, and to evaluate the supporting and inhibiting factors. The results of the study indicate that methods such as class discussions, case studies, presentations, group projects, and reflections are the most effective approaches in shaping students' social ethics values.

### Formation of Social Ethics through Social Studies Learning

Social ethics is a branch of ethics that discusses moral principles and values that regulate relationships between individuals in a social context (Fajriyati, *et al*, 2024). In education, social ethics focuses on the formation of students' moral awareness and responsibility towards their social environment, emphasizing justice, respect for the rights of others, and solidarity. (Mohamad Ariff *et al.*, 2021)

Social studies learning at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon includes various methods designed to internalize social values in students. One common method applied is class discussion, where students are trained to express opinions and listen to the views of others. The learning process through this discussion is usually delivered in themes related to community life and social values, such as material on cultural diversity, human rights, citizenship, and social responsibility. As research conducted by (Singh, 2019) show that Class discussions as an institutional responsibility are able to actively shape students' social behavior and character.

**Table 1.** Learning Methods and Ethical Values Formed

No	Social Studies Learning Methods	Ethical values that are formed	
1	Class discussion	Tolerance,	respecting opinions

2	Social Case Study	Empathy, social concern
3	Presentation	Courage to speak, language ethics
4	Group Project	Cooperation, responsibility answers social
5	Learning Reflection	Introspection, self-awareness

From the results above, it can be seen that social studies learning in SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon actively plays a role in forming social values such as tolerance, empathy, and responsibility. The class discussion method provides students with the opportunity to express their opinions, listen to other views, and learn to appreciate differences. As expressed by one of the students: "When discussing, we learn to appreciate friends' opinions even though they are different. The teacher also teaches us to speak politely and listen well." (Student, interview, 2024).

This method supports the view (Viridi *et al.*, 2023) And (Nadia *et al.*, 2023) Considering the importance of social interaction in the educational process, which is where students gain knowledge to understand other people's perspectives and develop deeper understanding. Social case studies are also one of the methods used by educators or teachers to teach ethical values through real examples. Through case studies, students analyze certain social situations and learn how ethical values are applied in real life. A sociology teacher stated: "With case studies, students see firsthand how ethics are applied in real situations, helping them understand the importance of ethics in everyday life." (Sociology Teacher, personal interview, 2024).

This approach is in line with the principles of constructivism expressed by (Mayer, 2019), which emphasizes the importance of real-world experiential learning to build meaningful knowledge. The presentation method also facilitates learning social ethics. Through presentations, students not only learn to deliver material, but also learn how to speak in public with an ethical approach, such as using polite language and listening to the audience. This supports the social learning theory (Bandura, 2006), which states that

social behavior is learned through observation and modeling of social interactions.

In addition, group projects provide opportunities for students to work together and be socially responsible. As stated in the research conducted by (Syarnubi *et al.*, 2021) found that the implementation of character education in madrasas through group discussion methods and project assignments had a significant positive impact on the internalization of social ethical values.

In the group work process, students learn how to divide tasks, collaborate, and be accountable for their group's results. As expressed by one student: "Group work teaches us to work together and help each other, and understand that everyone has their own responsibilities." (Student, personal interview, 2024). According to (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), cooperative learning in groups improves social skills and strengthens interpersonal relationships, which are important components of the formation of social ethics.

### **Effective Social Studies Learning Models in Promoting Social Ethics**

Based on the research results, the project-based learning model and class discussions have proven to be the most effective methods in promoting social ethics in SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon. In project-based learning, students are directly involved in activities related to real social issues, such as local history projects or observations of social norms in the surrounding environment. The selection of local history project issues and observations of social norms in the surrounding environment were chosen because both have direct relevance to the students' social context, making it easier for students to understand and relate social ethics values to their real experiences.

Meanwhile, observing social norms invites students to critically observe the unwritten rules and behaviors that apply in their daily society. This approach strengthens the understanding of social ethics in a contextual and applicable manner, so that learning is more meaningful and able to encourage changes in students' social attitudes and behaviors.

**Table 2.** Effective Learning Models in Promoting Social Ethics

No	Learning model	Effectiveness
1	Project Based Learning	Very effective
2	Class Discussion	Effective
3	Group Presentation	Quite effective
4	Use of Digital Media	Quite effective

Class discussions serve as a forum for building students' critical thinking skills and training them in expressing and listening to opinions. (Prasetyo & Rosy, 2021). Students learn to appreciate different perspectives of conversation and develop a sense of tolerance and empathy, which are the basis of social ethics. According to (S, 2024), effective classroom discussions encourage students to think more deeply about complex social issues, thereby supporting the development of their moral character.

The project-based approach is very effective because it gives students the opportunity to see how ethical values are applied in real situations. For example, a local history project conducted at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon provides students with an understanding of ethical values such as tolerance and cooperation. The local history project implemented at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon focuses on exploring and understanding important events and cultural heritage in and around Cirebon. One of the themes that is often raised is the history of the development of the Kasepuhan Palace and the Kanoman Palace, which are the centers of culture and traditional values of the Cirebon community. Through this project, students learn the ethical values contained in the lives of the people around the palace, such as attitudes of tolerance between religious communities, mutual cooperation, and respect for tradition.

In addition, students are also invited to study how the Cirebon community maintains social harmony amidst the existing ethnic and religious diversity. By understanding this local history and culture, students can apply social ethical values such as mutual respect, cooperation, and tolerance in their daily lives. This project not only enriches students' historical knowledge, but also strengthens

their understanding of the importance of social values in building social harmony. A history teacher said: "Through this project, students can see firsthand how ethical values are applied in the context of society." (History Teacher, personal interview. 2024)

This approach not only teaches academic material, but also supports students in developing important social skills. Class discussions are also effective in helping students understand and comprehend the principles of social ethics. Through discussions, students learn how to express their opinions in a polite manner and listen to the views of others. This is important in building a sense of social responsibility and critical thinking skills. Class discussions provide a space for students to explore social issues in depth and critically, in accordance with their views. (Alfiansyah & Wangid, 2018) about the importance of education as a means of preparing students to participate actively in society. Group presentations provide students with the opportunity to practice communication skills and work in teams, increasing their confidence in interacting with others.

#### Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Formation of Social Ethics

The main supporting factor is the collaborative approach between teachers and students, where teachers act as facilitators in the learning process, helping students develop social ethical values through direct interaction and reflection. This is in line with research conducted by (Umam & Ferianto, 2023).

**Table 3.** Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Formation of Social Ethics

No	Factor	Description
1	Collaborative Approach	Teachers as facilitators of social interaction
2	P5 Program	Strengthening character through practical activities
3	Parental Involvement	Supporting ethical learning at home
4	Differences in Social Background	Promote mutual understanding in class

5	Limited Resources	Lack of supporting learning materials
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### **Supporting Factors in the Formation of Social Ethics**

The factors that support the formation of students' social ethics at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon are very diverse and include various approaches. One key factor is the collaborative approach between teachers and students. In this approach, teachers act as facilitators, allowing students to actively participate in the teaching and learning process. Activities such as class discussions, case studies, and group projects provide students with opportunities to practice social values such as tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility. By participating directly, students can internalize these values deeply, and this creates an atmosphere of mutual respect that helps shape an inclusive learning environment.

Support from school programs such as the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Program (P5) is also an important factor in the formation of students' social ethics. This program is designed to strengthen students' character through the application of Pancasila values in various school activities, including group projects and social activities. Through this program, students are trained to work together, be responsible, and practice ethical values in real life. This program has a significant impact in helping students not only learn moral principles theoretically, but also use these principles in everyday life situations that help build their character as a whole.

The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Program identifies five main dimensions as the focus of student character formation, namely faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character; global diversity that instills respect for cultural, religious, ethnic, and worldview diversity and the ability to live side by side in harmony; mutual cooperation, which includes attitudes of helping each other, working together, and contributing to community life; independence, namely students who are confident, able to make decisions, and are responsible for their actions; and critical and creative reasoning that is able to think analytically

and innovatively in solving problems and facing challenges.

Integrating these values into learning activities and extracurricular programs, P5 contributes significantly to the formation of students' social ethics. Students not only learn the values of Pancasila theoretically, but also apply them directly through contextual and meaningful learning experiences in school and community life. In addition, this program helps students not only learn moral principles theoretically, but they also use these principles in real-life situations, which helps them build their character.

In line with research conducted by (Hermino & Arifin, 2020) the effectiveness of contextual character education involving discussion and collaboration between students in learning in secondary schools, which is very relevant to the goal of forming social ethics. This finding supports a learning strategy that emphasizes social interaction as an important vehicle in forming attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility in students, in line with the integration of the values of the Pancasila Student Profile in the curriculum.

In history lessons, for example, students learn about the moral dilemmas faced by important figures, which enriches their understanding of justice and integrity. The active involvement of parents and the community is also a crucial supporting factor. With the cooperation between schools, families, and the community, students receive full support to apply ethical values both in the school environment and at home, creating a synergy that strengthens the formation of social ethics as a whole.

At SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon, cooperation between the school, family, and community has been running synergistically to support the formation of students' social ethics. The school routinely holds activities involving parents, such as parent-teacher meetings, character education workshops, and mentoring programs that invite families to play an active role in instilling ethical values at home. In addition, the school also collaborates with various community organizations and local figures in holding social activities and community service involving students, so that

students gain direct experience in applying social ethical values in the community environment.

This collaboration creates a holistic learning environment, where ethical values are not only taught in the classroom but also reinforced through interaction and support from families and the surrounding community. For example, community service activities with residents around the school and participation in local traditional celebrations become a means of learning the values of mutual cooperation, responsibility, and mutual respect. With this synergy, the formation of students' social ethics becomes more comprehensive and sustainable, strengthening students' characters both in the school environment and at home and in the community.

### **Supporting Factors in the Formation of Social Ethics**

Although various efforts are made to shape students' social ethics, there are several challenges that can hinder the process at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon. One of the main obstacles is the differences in students' social backgrounds. Students come from diverse environments, both culturally, religiously, and economically, so they have different understandings of what is considered ethical behavior. Culturally, students come from various tribes and ethnic groups, each of which has its own traditions, values, and social customs. For example, some students come from Javanese communities that tend to prioritize values of harmony and politeness, while others come from Sundanese communities or other ethnicities that have different social norms.

In terms of religion, diversity of beliefs is also a factor that influences students' understanding of social ethics. In addition to the majority being Muslim, there are also students who are Christian. The variation in religious teachings and practices can create its own challenges in aligning understanding of social ethical values, especially if certain religious norms collide or have different interpretations from the values taught in schools. This sometimes causes tension in group discussions and in students' daily social lives.

The economic level of students also varies greatly, from students from middle to upper income families to those from financially disadvantaged

families. In addition, these differences in socioeconomic status sometimes create social gaps and differences in treatment between students, which can be a source of conflict and obstacles in the formation of the expected social solidarity. Overall, the cultural, religious, and economic diversity in SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon creates complex challenges in the process of internalizing social ethical values. To overcome this, a learning approach is needed that is sensitive to differences, able to accommodate this diversity, and encourages attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and respect for differences as an integral part of the formation of students' social ethics. For students who come from environments with norms that are different from those taught in schools, the process of internalizing social ethical values can be difficult. This also has an impact on social interactions between students, where differences of opinion can cause tension in group work or class discussions.

In addition to differences in background, limited time and resources are also significant challenges in learning social ethics. A dense curriculum often leaves little time to discuss ethical topics in depth. Teachers must pursue academic targets that limit discussions about ethical values. Minimal resources, such as relevant teaching materials and supporting learning aids, also affect the quality of ethics teaching. When teachers do not have adequate access to materials or teaching aids, it is difficult for them to make ethics learning interesting and effective.

Lack of specific training for teachers in teaching social etiquette is also a major barrier. Teachers who do not receive adequate training often feel unsure or unskilled in handling discussions that require ethical sensitivity, especially when the topics involve controversial values. The outside-school environment, such as family and peer influences, also amplify this challenge. If the values prevailing at home or in peer groups conflict with those taught in school, students are likely to experience value confusion or even conflict, which can ultimately hinder the internalization of social etiquette.

### **Strategy to Overcome Obstacles**

In overcoming these obstacles, SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon has developed strategies such as

strengthening collaboration with parents through more intensive communication and increasing involvement in school activities related to social ethics learning. In addition, the use of digital technology has become an effective solution to overcome the limitations of teaching materials, by providing more interesting and interactive learning resources for students.

Continuous teacher training is also a priority to improve their competence in teaching social ethical values more confidently and effectively. This strategy ensures that teachers are able to handle ethical topics in a way that is inclusive and relevant to students from different social backgrounds.

## CONCLUSION

Social Studies (IPS) learning at SMA Negeri 4 Cirebon plays an important role in the formation of students' social ethics through participatory methods such as discussions, case studies, and collaborative projects. Project-based learning models and class discussions have proven to be the most effective in fostering values such as tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility. The role of teachers as facilitators and the support of school programs such as P5 also strengthen this process. Although limited to one location and using a qualitative approach, this study enriches the application of symbolic interactionism theory in the context of education. Further quantitative research and the development of learning modules are recommended to expand the application of the findings systematically.

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