

The Reality of Humanitarian Social Values: Tolerance, Empathy, and Peace in Elementary School

Anggun Nur Fadillah^{1✉}, Efa Ferawati², Tiara Nissa Novita³, Auliya Aenul Hayati⁴,
Faisal Rahmat Permana⁵, Manuel Malonisio⁶

¹⁻⁵Faculty of Education and Science, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Indonesia

⁶Commission on Higher Education, Aklan State University, Philippines

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Abstract

This study explores the internalization of humanitarian social values tolerance, empathy, and peace among elementary school students in Indonesia. While national curricula emphasize character education, there remains a disconnect between policy and classroom practice. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research combined quantitative surveys with qualitative classroom observations and teacher interviews. The instrument's validity and reliability were confirmed through Pearson's correlation and Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.826$), and descriptive statistics revealed high scores in tolerance ($M = 32.73$), moderate in empathy ($M = 29.47$), and low in peacefulness ($M = 25.63$). However, qualitative findings uncovered behavioral gaps. Students frequently showed blame-oriented responses, emotional disengagement, and minimal conflict resolution skills. Thematic analysis, supported by inter-coder agreement and member checking, revealed that moral knowledge was rarely translated into daily behavior. This misalignment indicates that character education is often limited to declarative instruction without experiential or emotional reinforcement. The study concludes that schools must adopt participatory and emotionally grounded pedagogies to bridge this value-practice gap. Recommendations include integrating social-emotional learning (SEL), teacher training in inclusive strategies, and aligning school culture with national moral objectives. The findings underscore the importance of transforming moral education from abstract knowledge into lived, embodied practices that shape students' everyday social interactions.

Keywords: character education, humanitarian values, inclusive education, peace education, social and emotional learning, value internalization.

✉Corresponding Author:

Anggun Nur Fadillah, Faculty of Education and Science, Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati

Email: anggunnr006@gmail.com

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, education is no longer confined to the transmission of cognitive knowledge alone, it is a transformative process that seeks to develop holistic human beings who are intellectually competent, emotionally intelligent, morally grounded, and socially responsible (Marpaung et al., 2023). A significant pillar in this transformation is character education, which encompasses the internalization of

core values that shape students' personality and behavior. Within this domain, humanitarian social values, such as empathy, tolerance, and peace, have emerged as indispensable in nurturing individuals capable of building inclusive and harmonious societies (Gandana et al., 2023; Sholekah, 2020).

Character education is more than the mere teaching of ethical codes or behavioral expectations; it is a pedagogical framework

that cultivates moral habits through consistent modeling, habituation, and internalization of virtues (Lickona, 1996). In the Indonesian context, the Ministry of Education has formally adopted the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Pancasila Student Profile) as a national educational vision to nurture learners who are not only academically proficient but also embody moral and civic virtues (Humaida & Suyadi, 2021). These virtues faith, integrity, independence, mutual cooperation, critical thinking, and global citizenship, directly align with the global educational agenda set by UNESCO, which emphasizes peace, human rights, and tolerance as educational priorities (Janna et al., 2024).

Elementary education plays a pivotal role in this moral development. During the formative years of 6–12, children enter a crucial stage of moral cognition, where they begin to distinguish right from wrong not merely based on consequences but also on values and principles (Kohlberg, 1981). Hence, early intervention through character education serves as a preventive measure against moral degradation, including behaviors such as bullying, discrimination, and violence, phenomena that have become increasingly prevalent in primary schools globally and in Indonesia (Hendriana, 2024; Sonia, 2020).

Recent studies have illuminated a troubling trend in educational environments: the erosion of core human values among children. According to the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), there has been a substantial increase in bullying and physical abuse cases in schools, indicating not only institutional failure but also a broader sociocultural crisis in value transmission (Hendriana, 2024). Sonia (2020) further underscores that nearly 30%

of elementary school students have encountered some form of violence at school, suggesting a systemic disconnect between formal character education and its internalization in everyday interactions.

Despite governmental efforts and curricular mandates, the practical integration of humanitarian values, particularly empathy, tolerance, and peace, remains insufficient. A nationwide survey conducted by the Indonesian Center for Character Education Studies revealed that only 45% of elementary students demonstrated tolerance towards differences (Sinaga, 2021). Similarly, Gamage et al. (2021) observed that a mere 40% of students genuinely understand and embody these values in daily practice. This gap between formal education and affective behavioral outcomes exposes a critical deficiency in the implementation of character education: a lack of experiential and context-based learning strategies.

Much of the existing research remains descriptive or policy-oriented, lacking granular insights into how these values translate into observable behaviors and interpersonal dynamics among children. Moreover, most character education programs in Indonesian elementary schools remain focused on discipline and obedience rather than the cultivation of pro-social behavior grounded in humanitarian values. There is scant evidence on how pedagogical methods, such as cooperative learning, role playing, peace education modules, and inclusive classroom practices, can influence students' capacity for empathy and tolerance.

This evidentiary void poses significant challenges for educators and policymakers alike. Hence, the novelty of this study lies in its empirical examination of the actual implementation and comprehension of social humanitarian values, specifically empathy,

tolerance, and peace, within the context of Indonesian elementary education. By focusing not only on curricular content but also on students' experiences and responses, this research seeks to offer grounded insights into how values education can be operationalized more effectively in culturally diverse and socially complex settings.

Tolerance, in its educational sense, involves the acknowledgment and appreciation of diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, opinion, and social background. It is essential for democratic citizenship and social cohesion (Natalia et al., 2023). In multicultural societies like Indonesia, where ethnic and religious heterogeneity is intrinsic, the early internalization of tolerance is crucial to prevent the formation of prejudiced or exclusionary mindsets. Educating students in tolerance involves more than abstract instruction; it requires immersive, dialogical, and experiential learning. Practices such as group collaboration, narrative storytelling from diverse perspectives, and conflict resolution simulations help foster an environment where students not only understand differences but value them as part of their social identity (Fita Mustafida, 2020).

Empathy, the second core value, is the cognitive and affective capacity to understand and share the emotional states of others. It underpins prosocial behaviors such as helping, forgiving, and cooperating (Yanuar et al., 2023). While empathy is partly innate, it is also a skill that can be cultivated through consistent modeling, emotional literacy programs, and reflective practices. In elementary education, empathy facilitates inclusiveness by reducing aggression and increasing emotional regulation. It is a predictor of peer

acceptance, classroom belonging, and resilience. However, as Hermawan & Anjariyah (2023) argue, without direct experiences of care, sharing, and solidarity, children struggle to translate empathy into meaningful social action.

Peace, as both a value and a practice, is more than the absence of conflict; it is the presence of justice, respect, and cooperation. Peace education involves equipping students with the knowledge and skills to address conflicts constructively, promote fairness, and engage in dialogue (Tular & Manik 2022). It is inherently interlinked with both empathy and tolerance. The concept of peace education is supported by global institutions such as UNESCO, which asserts that building a culture of peace must begin in classrooms, through curricula that promote human rights, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding (Rosyad & Dian, 2022). In practice, however, Indonesian schools often fall short in incorporating peace education as a structured program, instead treating it as an implicit expectation.

According to (Suhartono et al., 2024) humanitarian values, such as empathy, solidarity, social justice, and tolerance, are essential for building ethical societies. These values are not ideologically confined; they are universal norms that reflect our common humanity. In pedagogical terms, they represent a moral compass that should guide both teaching practices and institutional policies. Inclusivity is a central characteristic of humanitarian values. An inclusive educational environment celebrates diversity and ensures equitable opportunities for all learners regardless of background.

It allows children to experience dignity and recognition, which in turn fosters a strong sense of self and other. In this light, the classroom becomes not just a site of

knowledge transmission but of moral formation and social transformation (Boba & Saingo, 2023). Inculcating humanitarian values is particularly critical in primary education, as children's social reasoning and moral emotions are still malleable. At this stage, the modeling of ethical conduct by teachers, the cultivation of peer empathy, and the promotion of peaceful problem solving are more likely to leave a lasting imprint on students' worldviews (Annur et al., 2023).

Teachers and educational institutions are the mediators of value internalization. They bear the responsibility not only for instructional delivery but for the creation of a moral climate conducive to ethical learning. However, many schools, particularly in developing contexts, are ill equipped for this task. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of teacher training in socio-emotional learning, and rigid curriculum structures undermine the efficacy of value-based education (Cefai et al., 2018).

Moreover, school policies often prioritize academic performance over socialemotional development. This skewed focus contributes to an environment where competition and individual success are emphasized at the expense of communal well-being and empathy. In response, scholars argue for the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks that explicitly teach children how to manage emotions, develop caring relationships, and make responsible decisions (Riswakhyuningsih et al., 2025).

While many studies have discussed the theoretical importance of character education, there is a scarcity of empirical research exploring students' lived experiences with these values in real classroom settings. Much of the literature

remains policy-based or descriptive, with limited insights into the effectiveness of experiential methods like role playing, cooperative learning, or inclusive practices. Furthermore, character education in Indonesian schools tends to emphasize obedience and discipline, often neglecting the cultivation of pro-social behaviors rooted in empathy and tolerance.

This study addresses that gap by exploring the actual implementation and perception of humanitarian social values specifically empathy, tolerance, and peace among Indonesian elementary students. It differs from previous works by focusing not just on curricular content but on students' personal experiences and school environments that support or hinder value formation.

The author aims to (1) assess students' understanding of these core values, (2) explore the pedagogical strategies used to instill them, and (3) identify challenges and opportunities in fostering a culture of peace and empathy in primary education. Through this approach, the study contributes novel empirical insight into how value education can be made more effective and contextually relevant.

2. Method

This research began with a library research activity that aims to explore various problems regarding social and humanitarian values that occur in the school environment that have been discussed in previous articles or studies. Library research is research whose objects are sought with various library information such as books, scientific journals, magazines, newspapers, and documents (Sari & Asmendri, 2020). The results of this library research are the basis for formulating the focus of the research,

designing instruments, and choosing the right method for collecting field data.

A mixed methods approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem. This methodological integration allows for triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and depth of the findings. As defined by [Creswell & Creswell \(2017\)](#), mixed methods research integrates the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data through collection, analysis, and interpretation to address complex social phenomena more holistically.

Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' application of core humanitarian values such as empathy, tolerance, and peace. The instrument employed a Likert scale and was administered to a sample of elementary students. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 to determine patterns and levels of value internalization.

Prior to statistical analysis, content and face validity of the instrument were assessed through expert judgment involving two educational professionals with expertise in character education. Feedback was used to

refine the clarity, relevance, and construct alignment of the items. After revision, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of students and construct validity was measured using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to confirm the underlying structure of the instrument. Qualitative data were gathered through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with two teachers to gain deeper insights into how these values are perceived, practiced, and reinforced within the school environment. The qualitative findings were used to complement and contextualize the quantitative results, allowing for richer interpretation and theory building.

3. Result and Discussion

To evaluate the accuracy of the instrument designed to measure humanitarian social values specifically tolerance, empathy, and peace Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed for the validity test. An item was considered valid if its correlation value exceeded the critical *r*-table threshold of 0.361. As presented in Table 1, the correlation coefficients for the tolerance indicators ranged from 0.693 to 0.976, demonstrating that each item effectively captured the intended construct.

Table 1. Validity Test of Tolerance Indicators

Indicator	r-count	r-table	Description
Respect friends even if their opinions are different	0.973	0.361	Valid
listen to friends' opinions even if they are different	0.869	0.361	Valid
Treat all friends fairly, even if their habits are different	0.824	0.361	Valid
Stay friends even though friends like different games	0.920	0.361	Valid
Not forcing friends to follow my will	0.908	0.361	Valid
Let friends choose for themselves, even if their choices are different	0.778	0.361	Valid
It's nice to have friends with different habits	0.818	0.361	Valid
Don't like to fight just because of different opinions	0.693	0.361	Valid
want to work together with all friends when studying in groups	0.829	0.361	Valid

Indicator	r-count	r-table	Description
Remain friendly and helpful to friends, even though we often have different opinions	0.976	0.361	Valid

Referring to Table 1, the highest correlation ($r = 0.976$) was found in the item “Remain friendly and helpful to friends, even though we often have different opinions,” suggesting that this statement strongly reflects the construct of tolerance. This item likely captures the behavioral aspect of tolerance in interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, the item “Don't like to fight just because of different opinions” yielded the lowest r-count ($r = 0.693$), although it still surpasses the threshold. This may suggest that while it relates to tolerance, it might reflect a more general attitude or passive behavior rather than active engagement with diversity.

Viewed as a whole, the items reflect various aspects of tolerance, including showing respect for diverse viewpoints,

treating others fairly despite differences in habits, and engaging in collaborative actions. These aspects correspond to both emotional and behavioral expressions of tolerance within social environments. The validity results across all items confirm the strength of the instrument, indicating its appropriateness for measuring students' attitudes of tolerance in educational settings. (Hardinsyah, 2022).

As shown in Table 2 below, the empathy indicators yielded correlation values ranging from 0.629 to 0.885. These results indicate that the items were effective in capturing elements like emotional sensitivity and prosocial tendencies, consistent with Santamaría et al., (2021) emotional intelligence framework.

Table 2. Validity Test of Empathy Indicators

Indicator	r-count	r-table	Description
Knowing a friend is sad from his face or attitude	0.722	0.361	Valid
Listening to a friend who is sad or confused	0.781	0.361	Valid
Want to help friends who have difficulty doing their assignments	0.629	0.361	Valid
If a friend falls or is sick, I immediately help him or call the teacher	0.855	0.361	Valid
Happy when my friend gets good grades	0.885	0.361	Valid
Feeling sad when my friends lose things or are having a hard time	0.776	0.361	Valid
Calming down a friend who is crying or angry	0.631	0.361	Valid
Asking friends if you see them looking sad or quiet	0.689	0.361	Valid
Try not to say rude things even when you're annoyed	0.762	0.361	Valid
Don't shout or hit friends when angry	0.698	0.361	Valid

Table 2 illustrate, the highest validity was found in the item “Happy when my friend gets good grades” with an r-count of 0.885, which reflects a strong emotional resonance with others' positive experiences an essential component of affective empathy. Similarly, items such as “If a friend falls or is sick, I immediately help him or call the

teacher” ($r = 0.855$) and “Listening to a friend who is sad or confused” ($r = 0.781$) also scored highly, indicating that behavioral and emotional responses to others' difficulties are well captured by the instrument.

On the other hand, the item with the lowest validity score was “Want to help

friends who have difficulty doing their assignments” ($r = 0.629$), followed by “Calming down a friend who is crying or angry” ($r = 0.631$). While these values are still above the r -table and considered valid, their relatively lower scores may suggest that these behaviors, while empathetic, might also be influenced by other factors such as a sense of responsibility, discipline, or social expectation, not purely emotional resonance. The items reflect different facets of empathy, such as the ability to recognize and respond to others' emotions, willingness to help others, and the capacity to manage reactions in social settings. The strong

validity of each statement confirms that the tool is reliable for assessing students' empathetic behaviors.

These findings enhance the instrument's construct validity and highlight its relevance for use in educational or psychological evaluations focusing on empathy (Manda & Arifin, 2024). The peace-related indicators presented in Table 3 below also showed strong validity, with correlation values ranging from 0.671 to 0.826. These findings confirm that the items effectively represent key aspects of peace education, including conflict prevention, forgiveness, and cooperative problem-solving.

Table 3. Validity Test of Peace Indicators

Indicator	r-count	r-table	Description
Don't like to fight with friends	0.757	0.361	Valid
If you are annoyed, prefer to be silent rather than angry	0.802	0.361	Valid
If there is a problem, prefer to talk nicely with friends	0.671	0.361	Valid
Want to discuss to solve problems with friends	0.760	0.361	Valid
Forgive a friend who has apologized	0.735	0.361	Valid
Don't hold anger if your friend has apologized	0.760	0.361	Valid
Don't make noise or shout in class	0.678	0.361	Valid
Help maintain a calm and comfortable classroom atmosphere	0.694	0.361	Valid
Cheer up a friend who is sad or scared	0.826	0.361	Valid
Likes to make friends get along and have fun at school	0.704	0.361	Valid

Table 3 presents the results of the indicator with the highest r -count value is “Cheer up a friend who is sad or scared” ($r = 0.826$), suggesting that offering emotional support to peers is a strong reflection of peaceful and compassionate behavior. Another highly valid item is “If you are annoyed, prefer to be silent rather than angry” ($r = 0.802$), which highlights the role of emotional regulation in maintaining peaceful interactions.

On the other end, “If there is a problem, prefer to talk nicely with friends” ($r = 0.671$) and “Don't make noise or shout in class” ($r = 0.678$) scored the lowest among the valid items, though still well above the threshold.

These slightly lower values may reflect the fact that such behaviors, while aligned with peace, might be more influenced by classroom norms or discipline rather than intrinsic peacefulness.

The indicators of peace cover various aspects of students' peaceful conduct, including self-control, the ability to resolve conflicts, willingness to forgive, maintaining a harmonious classroom environment, and engaging in positive social interactions. These diverse elements contribute to a comprehensive portrayal of peace-oriented behavior within the school setting. The consistently high validity scores across all items indicate that the instrument is

appropriate for assessing students' peaceful attitudes and behaviors in both educational and social contexts (Ozcan & Neslihan, 2021).

To determine the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was employed as the statistical measure (Table 4). The analysis yielded an overall coefficient of $\alpha = 0.826$ for the 30-item scale, which, based on the criteria set by Hair et al. (2012), falls within the category of high reliability. This result signifies a strong level of internal consistency, indicating that the instrument is sufficiently robust for evaluating humanitarian values among elementary school students.

Table 4. Instrument Reliability Test Using Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Interpretation
0.826	30	High Reliability

The results confirm that the questionnaire items possess construct validity and demonstrate strong psychometric properties, making them suitable for both research and practical use in primary education contexts. To further assess the extent to which students internalize humanitarian values, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted involving 30 elementary students. Responses were collected using a four-point Likert scale across ten indicators for each value domain: tolerance, empathy, and peace. Table 5 presents the summary descriptive statistics.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Humanitarian Social Values

Statistic	Tolerance (T.total)	Empathy (E.total)	Peacefulness (K.total)
N (Valid)	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	32.73	29.47	25.63
Median	34.00	31.50	22.50
Mode	38	37	20
Std. Deviation	5.994	7.542	7.708
Range	19	23	22
Minimum	21	16	17
Maximum	40	39	39
Sum	982	884	769

Table 5 illustrates descriptive statistics revealed that among the three domains, the average score for tolerance was the highest among the three domains (Mean = 32.73, SD = 5.99), suggesting that students cognitively understood and recognized the importance of accepting diverse perspectives. The median (34.00) and mode (38) further confirm this trend. However, these findings must be interpreted cautiously. According to Lickona (1991), declarative knowledge of moral values does not necessarily imply behavioral

internalization. Students may acknowledge the significance of tolerance in theory while struggling to apply it consistently in practice.

Although the quantitative analysis indicated a high level of tolerance, qualitative evidence exposed a significant gap between knowledge and behavior. Students frequently resorted to blaming peers during disagreements and lacked mechanisms for constructive dialogue. The classroom environment lacked dialogic spaces for students to express dissenting views safely,

reinforcing avoidance or defensiveness. This dissonance suggests that students may possess “declarative knowledge”, that is, awareness of what tolerance is without “procedural competence” to enact it (Lickona, 1991). In many cases, tolerance remained a verbal ideal rather than a practiced habit.

Beside that, the empathy dimension followed with a mean score of 29.47 (SD = 7.54). Although relatively high, the greater standard deviation points to significant variability among individual students. Some exhibited strong empathetic traits, while others scored notably lower, indicating uneven affective development. According to Goleman (2006), empathy is a central component of emotional intelligence and must be nurtured through experiential learning and guided reflection, which appears to be inconsistently implemented in this context.

Despite scoring moderately high in the empathy component of the survey, students exhibited little practical empathy in real-life scenarios. Teachers described their students as “easily offended” and “not used to understanding others' feelings.” Observations noted a general absence of helping behaviors and a deficit in recognizing peer distress, especially during emotionally charged moments such as conflict or peer underperformance (Asrial et al., 2023). Mischel (1971) concept of heteronomous morality is relevant here, as children in this age group (6–10 years) tend to follow rules and norms primarily set by authority figures. Without consistent adult modeling of empathetic responses, students are less likely to develop intrinsic emotional awareness. Moreover, Erikson (1968) suggests that school-aged children are navigating the crisis of industry vs.

inferiority, where social validation through action is essential. When opportunities for empathetic acts are not reinforced or recognized, their development remains stunted. In addition, Peacefulness received the lowest average score (Mean = 25.63, SD = 7.71), with a median of 22.50 and a mode of 20. The broader range and lower central tendency suggest that the students face more pronounced challenges in conflict resolution and maintaining harmonious relationships. This aligns with UNESCO (2023), which emphasizes that peace education requires systematic instruction, including conflict resolution training and non-violent communication practices, elements likely underdeveloped in the observed school environment.

The relatively high tolerance mean ($M = 32.73$) compared to empathy ($M = 29.47$) and peacefulness ($M = 25.63$) indicates that students are more comfortable accepting differences cognitively than managing emotional or conflict situations behaviorally. This pattern resonates with the socio-cultural context of Indonesian classrooms, where conformity and politeness are emphasized, potentially inflating tolerance scores while masking limited emotional engagement. The high variance in empathy and peace also reflects socio-emotional heterogeneity among students, likely influenced by differing family environments, teacher modeling, and exposure to cooperative learning activities.

Although the present study does not apply inferential statistics, the interrelation between empathy and peace can be conceptually inferred. Low peacefulness scores may be partially explained by inconsistent empathy expression, as conflict resolution and emotional regulation are often byproducts of empathetic understanding.

Future quantitative models could test this mediating relationship empirically.

The value of peace had the lowest mean score, and this was strongly supported by the qualitative data. Students were often quick to anger, competed rather than cooperated, and rarely resolved disputes through discussion. Observation logs revealed that small disagreements frequently escalated into overt conflicts due to a lack of mediation mechanisms or conflict resolution protocols. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes the importance of peace education as more than the absence of conflict; it entails equipping students with the capacity for self-regulation, dialogue, and mutual respect. The absence of structured peace-building activities or peermediation strategies in the observed classrooms may account for this underdevelopment.

According to Saks et al., (2021), declarative knowledge of moral values does not necessarily lead to behavioral internalization. Students may recognize the importance of tolerance in theory, yet still

struggle to consistently translate it into daily practice. Furthermore, Santamaría et al., (2021) emphasizes that empathy an essential element of emotional intelligence must be developed through experiential learning and guided reflection, both of which appear to be inconsistently applied in the school context examined.

In addition, UNESCO (2023) underscores that peace education requires a structured approach, including explicit training in conflict resolution and non-violent communication components that seem to be insufficiently integrated into the observed classroom environments. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that without deliberate pedagogical strategies, the cognitive understanding of humanitarian values may not evolve into meaningful behavior. Figure 1 provides a visual comparison of the average scores across the three humanitarian values tolerance, empathy, and peacefulness.

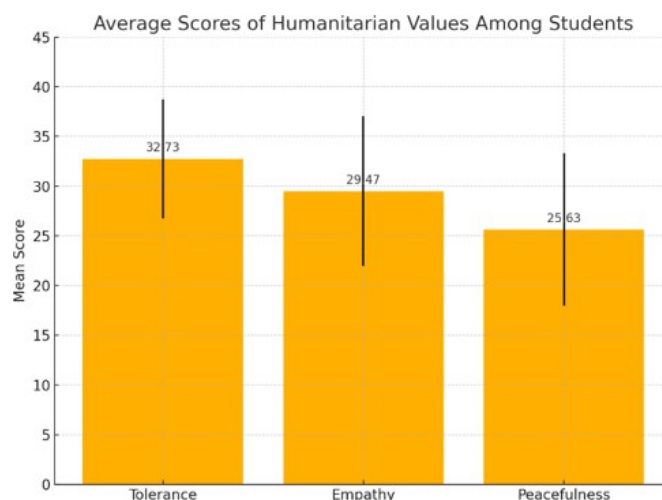


Figure 1. Bar Chart Comparing Tolerance, Empathy, and Peace Scores

Based on Figure 1, it is evident that while students exhibit cognitive recognition of humanitarian values particularly tolerance and empathy their emotional engagement and behavioral application remain limited.

This disparity reinforces the findings of Gamage et al. (2021), who argue that only a small proportion of students are able to transform moral understanding into consistent real-life practice. The noticeably

lower score for peacefulness further suggests that values requiring active conflict resolution and cooperation are more difficult for students to internalize without structured pedagogical support.

The qualitative component of this research sought to uncover the lived expressions of humanitarian values, tolerance, empathy, and peace, among elementary school students through thematic analysis of observational notes and semi structured interviews. Although quantitative indicators suggested a generally favorable disposition towards these values, field-based evidence illustrated a more complex and often contradictory reality.

A recurring theme across classroom observations was a pronounced preference among students to work independently rather than collaboratively. Group tasks were often reduced to parallel individual efforts with minimal interpersonal engagement. This behavior contradicts the collectivist values typically encouraged within Indonesian educational settings and reveals a latent individualism.

Interview data confirmed that many students struggled with accepting differing viewpoints and displayed tendencies toward dominating conversations or group

dynamics. This aligns with [Bandura's \(1977\)](#) social learning theory, which asserts that cooperative behavior must be modeled before it is internalized. The lack of structured social modeling within the classroom setting may explain the observed reluctance to engage in collaborative problem solving or peer-led discourse.

The thematic coding of teacher interviews revealed that moral education was largely transmitted through verbal explanation and reinforcement. While such methods offer foundational awareness, they fall short of the immersive, experiential learning necessary for value internalization. Teachers expressed interest in using alternative media such as music or drama but noted limitations in resources and training. [Bandura \(1977\)](#) argued that behavior is learned observationally through modeling. The absence of diverse pedagogical strategies, such as storytelling, role-playing, or digital media limits the reinforcement and contextual application of humanitarian values. This pedagogical gap is particularly detrimental for peace education, which thrives on experiential and participatory methods ([Amrillah et al., 2022](#)). As shown in Table 6, Summary of Interview and Observation Themes.

Table 6. Summary of Interview and Observation Themes

Theme	Observation Data	Interview Data	Interpretation
Social Interaction Patterns	Students showed limited collaboration; preferred working individually.	Teachers noted that students often want to dominate tasks and resist shared work.	Indicates low collectivist socialization and lack of cooperative learning modeling.
Empathy in Daily School Life	Students rarely helped peers in distress or acknowledged emotional cues.	Teachers reported that students were unfamiliar with others' emotional states and easily felt offended.	Empathy not fully developed; absence of emotional literacy instruction or narrative pedagogy.
Tolerance During Conflicts	Students frequently reacted negatively to differing opinions; group activities involved blaming behavior.	Teachers observed a pattern of defensiveness during disagreement and difficulty in appreciating differences.	Suggests cognitive knowledge of tolerance without dialogic classroom practice or emotional regulation.

Theme	Observation Data	Interview Data	Interpretation
Peace Orientation & Conflict Behavior	Verbal disputes and emotional outbursts were frequent; low cooperative problem solving.	Teachers highlighted student competitiveness and reluctance to resolve issues through dialogue.	Points to weak internalization of peace values and absence of conflict-resolution frameworks.
Pedagogical Approaches	Teachers primarily used verbal instructions to convey values; limited reinforcement during activities.	Teachers had not yet utilized media, stories, or dramatization but expressed openness to innovative tools.	Instruction was moralistic rather than experiential; underutilization of integrative, student-led methods.

Table 6 presents a summary of themes from interviews and observations, highlighting challenges in students' social-emotional development and instructional approaches. Students were generally reluctant to collaborate, preferred working alone, and often dominated tasks suggesting limited cooperative learning. Empathy was also underdeveloped, as students rarely responded to peers' emotional needs, and teachers noted their lack of emotional awareness. During conflicts, students showed low tolerance for differing opinions and often became defensive, indicating a lack of dialogic practice and emotional regulation. Verbal disputes were frequent, with minimal effort to resolve issues peacefully, reflecting weak internalization of peace values. Instructional methods were largely verbal and teachercentered, with limited use of interactive or experiential

strategies, although teachers expressed interest in more innovative approaches.

The triangulation of findings drawn from survey responses, classroom observations, and teacher interviews reveals a significant discrepancy between students' declarative knowledge of humanitarian values and their observable behavior. Although the quantitative data suggest a relatively strong internalization of tolerance and empathy, qualitative evidence points to shallow engagement and inconsistencies in actual practice. This contrast highlights the limitations of relying solely on cognitive assessments to evaluate value internalization. Table 7 summarizes the integrated results across the three data sources, illustrating how each value tolerance, empathy, and peacefulness is cognitively recognized yet variably demonstrated in real-life school.

Table 7. Triangulation Matrix Table

Value	Quantitative Score	Qualitative Reality	Interpretation
Tolerance	High (M = 32.73)	Blaming, reactive in conflict	Declarative knowledge without procedural application
Empathy	Moderate (M = 29.47)	Indifference, limited emotional literacy	Emotional understanding underdeveloped
Peacefulness	Low (M = 25.63)	Frequent disputes, minimal cooperation	Value not internalized; lack of conflict resolution

As Shown in Table 7 a triangulated analysis revealed a consistent pattern: while students appear to possess cognitive awareness of humanitarian values, their behaviors do not reflect meaningful internalization. As summarized in the

triangulation matrix, tolerance is acknowledged but inconsistently practiced; empathy is understood but not enacted; and peacefulness remains underdeveloped both cognitively and behaviorally. These findings align with [Gamage et al. \(2021\)](#), who argue

that moral cognition alone does not lead to moral action without experiential learning.

The discrepancy between students' declarative understanding of humanitarian values and their behavioral expression reflects a classical issue in moral psychology, namely the gap between moral cognition and moral action (Lickona, 1991; Kohlberg, 1981). Within the Indonesian educational milieu, this gap is exacerbated by teacher-centered pedagogies and limited opportunities for reflective dialogue. The findings thus extend Lickona's model by demonstrating that moral habituation requires not only consistent adult modeling but also emotionally safe classroom spaces where dissent and empathy can coexist.

When analyzed collectively, the three domains tolerance, empathy, and peacefulness illustrate a developmental hierarchy of humanitarian values. Tolerance appears as the most cognitively accessible, empathy as emotionally transitional, and peacefulness as behaviorally demanding. This hierarchy mirrors the moral internalization process described by Kohlberg (1981), wherein students move from heteronomous morality (rule-following) toward autonomous morality (value-driven behavior). In the current context, most students remain at the transitional stage, aware of moral ideals yet unable to consistently operationalize them.

From a contextual standpoint, these findings highlight a structural disjunction between curriculum ideals and classroom realities. Despite the integration of Profil Pelajar Pancasila in policy, its translation into classroom practice remains fragmented. The weak internalization of peace values suggests that emotional pedagogy and conflict resolution mechanisms have yet to be systematically embedded within the

learning culture. Hence, value-based education in Indonesia still operates more as moral rhetoric than transformative praxis.

This misalignment highlights the limitations of declarative knowledge in character education. Without procedural and dispositional reinforcement, values such as tolerance, empathy, and peacefulness remain abstract ideals (Rakhmah et al., 2024). The discrepancy also underscores the critical role of school ecology, curriculum design, teacher training, peer culture, in shaping moral behavior. The current findings echo prior scholarship suggesting that mere inclusion of values in educational content does not guarantee behavioral integration (Goleman, 2006; Lickona, 1991). Structured interventions, such as peer mediation programs, service learning, emotional literacy training, and value-infused pedagogies, are essential to bridge this gap.

Furthermore, the data underscore the necessity of policy-level support for value based education. This includes training teachers in non-cognitive pedagogies, providing resources for creative moral instruction, and embedding evaluation rubrics for affective outcomes. While students demonstrated promising cognitive understanding of humanitarian values, their application remains fragmented and inconsistent. A more holistic and experiential approach to moral education, anchored in theory and practice, is needed to transform declarative moral cognition into habitual moral behavior.

The findings of this study align with and extend existing literature on the gap between cognitive understanding and behavioral internalization of humanitarian values in early education. Although the quantitative data suggest that students scored relatively high in understanding tolerance, empathy,

and peacefulness, the qualitative data indicate a significant misalignment between these declarative understandings and lived practices. Such discrepancies are corroborated by previous studies. For instance, [Gamage et al. \(2021\)](#) found that although students in Nepal demonstrated theoretical knowledge of social values, only 40% reported actually applying these values in daily interactions, underscoring the challenge of transforming moral cognition into habitual action.

This mismatch is further supported by [Annur et al \(2023\)](#), who emphasize the urgent need for experiential character education that goes beyond traditional, didactic teaching. As seen in the current study, most participating teachers focused on verbal instruction with minimal use of immersive methods such as storytelling, role playing, or collaborative activities. These techniques are vital to fostering empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Their absence reflects a deeper systemic issue in educational delivery, one that prioritizes rote learning over transformative engagement. This observation supports [Lickona's \(1991\)](#) seminal argument that moral education must not be confined to the transmission of ethical knowledge but must include emotional engagement and moral action as well.

The novelty of this study lies in its triangulated methodology that combines questionnaire-based survey data with interview and observational insights. This mixed-methods approach provides a more holistic view of how values are actually enacted, or fail to be, in real life classroom contexts. The integration of these data sources enabled the identification of specific behavioral indicators that contradict the ostensibly high scores recorded in the quantitative phase. For instance, although

most students agreed with statements promoting peaceful behavior, field observations documented frequent conflictual interactions and resistance to collaborative work ([Prayitno et al., 2019](#)). Such grounded depictions of value dissonance bring muchneeded realism into the discourse on moral education.

Moreover, this study provides critical contextual insights into the misalignment between national curriculum policy and classroom implementation. While educational standards often mandate the cultivation of core values, the mechanisms for achieving these goals are seldom operationalized effectively. Teachers are rarely given the tools or training to facilitate emotionally rich, experience-based learning. Consequently, the classroom culture remains dominated by passive compliance rather than active participation, which impedes the development of internalized moral dispositions.

This disjunction is not merely theoretical but has tangible implications. As [Erikson \(1968\)](#) posited in his psychosocial development theory, children at the primary school age are navigating the “industry vs. inferiority” stage, where success is contingent upon the acquisition of socially recognized skills. If values such as tolerance and empathy are taught only in abstract terms, students may fail to perceive them as useful or valued traits within peer interactions, leading to moral disengagement.

Thus, this study confirms existing literature while offering fresh perspectives through empirical triangulation. The systemic gap between policy, pedagogy, and practice must be addressed if moral education is to evolve from aspiration to action. In response to the identified gaps and

inconsistencies, this study proposes a set of actionable recommendations designed to improve the internalization of humanitarian values among elementary students.

- a. **Adopt Experiential Pedagogy:** Schools should move beyond traditional lecture based methods and incorporate experiential learning strategies such as role playing, drama, and service learning. These immersive practices help students not only understand but also embody values through direct engagement ([Lickona, 1991](#)).
- b. **Integrate Social Emotional Learning (SEL):** Embedding SEL frameworks into the curriculum can strengthen students' emotional literacy and interpersonal competencies. These skills are crucial for fostering empathy, peaceful conflict resolution, and tolerance ([Goleman, 2006](#)).
- c. **Teacher Capacity Building:** Professional development programs should train educators in facilitative techniques that promote value internalization. This includes storytelling for empathy, circle discussions for tolerance, and peace-building exercises for conflict resolution.
- d. **Behavioral Rubrics for Monitoring:** Instead of relying solely on checklist-based assessments, schools should implement behavioral rubrics that capture nuanced indicators of social values. These rubrics should assess actions such as willingness to share,

conflict resolution attempts, and inclusive language.

- e. **Policy to Practice Alignment:** Ministries of education and school administrators must ensure that character education policies are translated into practical pedagogical models. This requires not only curricular reform but also infrastructural support for schools to adopt and sustain such models.

This study contributes new insights by combining quantitative and qualitative data to explore how humanitarian values are understood and practiced by elementary students. Unlike prior research that relies solely on self-reported surveys, this study captures the discrepancies between students' stated beliefs and their actual behaviors ([Rajiani et al., 2023](#)). The findings highlight the need to reform valuebased education by embedding experiential methods into everyday teaching. Only through holistic and participatory strategies can schools effectively bridge the gap between knowing and doing.

Building on the integrated findings, this study proposes a conceptual model for value internalization that emphasizes the role of experiential pedagogy and social-emotional learning (SEL). The model illustrates the progression from perceived understanding to reinforced behavior, ultimately leading to internalized humanitarian values such as tolerance, empathy, and peace. Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework underlying this value formation process.

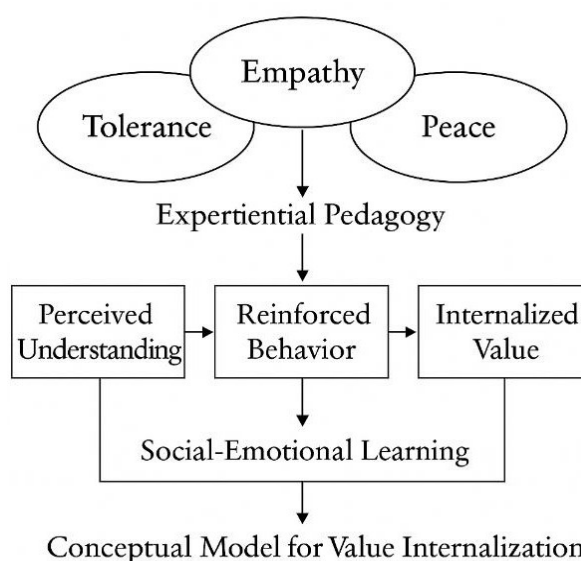


Figure 2. Conceptual Model for Value Internalization

As illustrated in Figure 2, the proposed model highlights the importance of bridging perceived understanding and behavioral reinforcement through experiential pedagogy and social-emotional learning. This framework not only reflects the findings of this study but also offers a practical pathway for educators and policymakers seeking to foster meaningful value internalization in primary education settings. As illustrated in Figure 2, the proposed model highlights the importance of bridging perceived understanding and behavioral reinforcement through experiential pedagogy and social-emotional learning. This framework not only reflects the findings of this study but also offers a practical pathway for educators and policymakers seeking to foster meaningful value internalization in primary education settings.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Indonesian elementary students possess a cognitive understanding of humanitarian values namely tolerance, empathy, and peace but their behavioral application remains limited. Through a mixed-methods design integrating

surveys, observations, and teacher interviews, the research uncovered a substantial gap between moral knowledge and everyday social practice. While students scored relatively high in tolerance and moderately in empathy, qualitative data revealed behaviors such as blaming peers, avoiding collaboration, and lacking emotional responsiveness. Peacefulness emerged as the least internalized value, both in statistical results and observed classroom dynamics. These findings underscore the need for character education to go beyond theoretical instruction and engage students through lived, emotional, and social experiences.

To address these challenges, this study recommends the implementation of experiential and emotionally responsive pedagogies such as storytelling, role-playing, and structured conflict resolution activities. These methods should be supported by teacher training in social-emotional learning (SEL) and inclusive classroom practices. Educational policies must also ensure that value-based education is not limited to curriculum content but is actively embedded in school culture. The study is limited by its

relatively small sample size and focus on urban schools, which may not capture regional diversity. Future research should examine the long-term effects of valuecentered pedagogy and explore variations across different cultural and educational settings. Ultimately, reimagining moral education as an embodied and participatory process is essential for fostering meaningful value internalization among young learners.

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