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## Moral and Personality Development in the Perspective of the SDGs: A Critical Analysis of Kohlberg's Theory and Its Implementation in Junior High Schools

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### Abstract

**Objective:** This study explores the implementation of moral and personality development within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by analyzing the application of Kohlberg's moral development theory through project-based learning in junior high schools in Purworejo, Central Java. The main objective of this research is to examine how project-based learning, as part of the independent curriculum, fosters students' moral and personality growth. **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework is based on Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development, emphasizing the importance of moral reasoning in shaping ethical behaviour. **Literature review:** A literature review reveals that integrating moral education into formal curricula, particularly through experiential learning, can enhance students' capacity for critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and personal responsibility—elements essential for achieving the SDGs in education. **Methods:** A qualitative descriptive method was employed, using observation, interviews, and documentation for data collection. Data analysis followed the steps of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. **Results:** The research findings indicate that at SMP Negeri 40, moral and personality development was effectively nurtured through democratic election projects (OSIS and MPK) and a local food processing initiative. Similarly, SMP Sultan Agung Purworejo applied the IPNU and IPPNU election projects, as well as a local cultural project titled Kitab Ngudi Susilo, to instil moral values and cultural awareness. **Implications:** The implications of this study suggest that contextual, project-based learning strategies are successful in aligning educational outcomes with the moral and personality competencies targeted by the independent curriculum and the SDGs. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in the contextual application of Kohlberg's theory within the Indonesian junior high school setting, highlighting how project-based learning can bridge theory and praxis in moral education.

**Keywords:** moral development, personality education, Kohlberg's theory, SDGs, project-based learning.

## INTRODUCTION

Moral and personality development in education plays a crucial role in shaping students into responsible, ethical, and socially aware individuals. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on Quality Education, fostering values such as integrity, empathy, and critical thinking is essential for preparing the younger generation to face complex global challenges. This study focuses on the implementation of moral and personality education in Indonesian junior high schools—specifically SMP Negeri 40 and SMP Sultan Agung Purworejo—through project-based learning as part of the independent curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) [1].

Guided by Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, this research critically analyzes how educational projects related to democracy, local wisdom, and cultural identity can strengthen students' moral reasoning and character formation. By connecting theory with field praxis, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on integrating moral education into curriculum design aligned with the principles of sustainable development [2].

Moral education is a learning process that aims to form and develop attitudes, values, and moral norms in individuals. The main goal of moral education is to help individuals understand the difference between right and wrong, develop the ability to make the right moral decisions and form a responsible and ethical personality. The main goal of moral education is to help individuals understand the difference between what is considered right and wrong in the context of ethics and morality. This process involves providing a deep understanding of universal ethical principles, socially recognized values, and norms that apply in society [2]. Through moral education, individuals are taught to respect the interests of others, respect human rights, practice justice, and promote goodness in interactions with others.

In addition, moral education aims to develop individuals' abilities to make appropriate moral decisions in complex and ambiguous situations [3]. Individuals are empowered with tools of ethical thinking, moral reflection, and moral reasoning that enable them to consider the consequences of their actions as well as the values underlying their decision-making [4]. This helps individuals face moral dilemmas with integrity and responsibility and molds them into ethical agents of change in society.

Furthermore, moral education also focuses on forming a responsible and ethical personality. Through moral education, individuals are taught to internalize moral values and principles that lead to honest, empathetic, responsible behavior and concern for the welfare of others. Moral education also plays a role in forming a positive attitude towards oneself, developing a healthy sense of self-confidence, and promoting a sense of responsibility towards oneself and society [5]. Moral education includes teaching and learning moral values such as honesty, integrity, empathy, responsibility, justice, and cooperation. Through the moral education process, individuals are expected to be able to understand and respect human rights, recognize and resolve moral conflicts, and play an active role in building a better society [6]. The development of students' morals and personality is an important thing in education [7]. Morality is a person's set of standards about what is "right" and "wrong" in various behaviors. Universally, Kohlberg said that what is universally true is contained in moral orientation, namely normative order, justice, consequences of actions, and the ideal self [8].

In his research, Lawrence Kohlberg succeeded in showing 6 stages in the entire process of developing moral judgment in children and young people. The six ideal types were obtained by changing Piaget/Dewey's three stages and making them into three "levels", each of which was further divided into two "stages". The three "levels" are pre-

conventional, conventional, and post-conventional levels [9]. According to Kohlberg's view of these three levels. Children must go through six stages within themselves. Each stage provides a path to the next stage when the child can find the rules at that stage, then the child must leave the moral reasoning from the initial stage to the next stage [10].

In this way, children's moral reasoning develops through three different levels, although not all children master it. The stages of moral development proposed by Kohlberg are much more complex than the stages of moral development in Piaget's theory. In this case the author examines the role of schools in efforts to develop moral reasoning and personality in their students through projects contained in the independent curriculum, such as Creativity, Entrepreneurship, Environmental Health, Science and Technology, Community Empowerment, Character Strengthening, Arts and Culture Projects, Sports and Health, Life Skills, Language and Literacy Development, Religious Education, Environment and Nature Conservation, Regional History and Culture, Tourism and Ecotourism, Agricultural, Social and Humanitarian Revitalization, Digitalization and Technological Innovation, Infrastructure Development, Research and Development, and Global Character Education [10].

The projects in this independent curriculum have elements that can help develop students' morals and personalities. Projects in the Merdeka Curriculum can help develop students' morals and personality through a more holistic approach and oriented towards direct experience. In these projects, students learn through practice, reflection, and interaction with the environment and surrounding community. This can help students develop social skills, leadership, empathy, and social responsibility [11]. Then what projects are implemented in this effort and how effective the implementation of these projects is.

The research that the author wrote offers a very innovative and revolutionary perspective in the context of journal writing. The significant difference with previous studies lies in combining Lawrence Kohlberg's theory about moral values with the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum and the implementation of project-based learning. This unique approach provides a deep and comprehensive impression in exploring new understanding regarding students' moral education in the modern era. This research takes a very interesting research object, namely the comparison between state junior high schools and private junior high schools. Both have their characteristics and uniqueness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum and project-based learning.

By choosing these different research objects, my research has the advantage of producing in-depth and detailed findings about the effectiveness of this approach in a variety of educational contexts. Not only that, this research also thoroughly examines the balance between students and school quality in the context of implementing the Merdeka curriculum. Although this curriculum is relatively new and not yet fully tested, this research shows that there is no problem in achieving an optimal balance between student ability and school quality. Each school has the freedom to develop learning projects that suit their unique capacities and characteristics. In a broader context, this research has very important implications for the development of the theory of moral values proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg.

By integrating this theory with the Merdeka curriculum and project-based learning, this research has the potential to make a significant contribution to enriching and expanding our understanding of the formation of moral values and character development of students in junior high schools. It is hoped that the findings of this research will provide valuable new insights and a more comprehensive understanding of this approach, as well as provide practical and relevant recommendations for future curriculum and learning development. Thus, this research can make a significant contribution to encouraging positive change in the world of education, especially at the public and private junior high school levels [10].

Based on observations made at SMP N 40 Purworejo and SMP Sultan Agung Purworejo, in this case, efforts to improve students' moral and personality development are more emphasized for grade 7 students. Along with the influence of globalization, currently, students' personality values and moral character have become weaker in various fields, especially in this case the school environment. Therefore, schools have an important role in developing students' morals and personalities through the democratic voice project in the independent curriculum. So, from the description of the background above, the author is interested in conducting research with the title "Development of Moral Reasoning and Personality: A Critical Study of Kohlberg's Theoretical Views and Field Praxis at SMP Negeri 40 Purworejo and SMP Sultan Agung.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The article, entitled: Efforts to Improve Morals in Children Through the Habit of Sharing at RA Nurul Huda Karang Rejo, Stabat District. Mawaddah Nasution and Rini's work, in the Intiqad Journal, Vol 8, No 2 of 2016. which contains: A child must be taught how to behave well or shown which behavior is wrong or less good following established norms. Applies. Morals regulate all actions that are considered good and need to be done, and an action is related to the ability to differentiate between right and wrong actions. Thus, morals are controlled by behavior. Therefore, there is a need for moral learning for children through habits, one of which is the habit of sharing. The subjects of this research were group B students at RA Nurul Huda, Karang Rejo Village, District. Stabat Kab. Langkat Academic Year 2016-2017 [\[12\]](#).

This research is collaborative between researchers, teachers, and school principals. Research procedures were carried out using qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain data and analysis through interview observation and documentation. The research was carried out through two cycles which were designed systematically with several stages, namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The results of the research show that there is an increase in morals in children through sharing habits, namely in cycle 1 the moral ability of children's behavior increases to 23.75%, in cycle 2 the moral ability of children's behavior increases to 51.25%, in cycle 3 the moral ability of children's behavior increases to figure 96.25%. From the results of observations from cycles 1 to 3, the habit of sharing can improve children's moral behavioral abilities [\[12\]](#).

Based on the article above, the journal discusses improving morals in children by sharing. Meanwhile, the research conducted by the author was research regarding improving moral education in grade 7 children in two different schools. The author examined improving morals through the P5 project which was implemented in these two schools.

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research. Qualitative research carries the tradition of post-positivism, which tends to be a research process to understand based on certain research methodology traditions by investigating social problems/phenomena in humans with all their behavior [\[13\]](#). Qualitative research is that it is a very important and useful approach in scientific research. Qualitative research has unique characteristics, including a deeper approach to understanding social phenomena and humans in all their behavior.

Qualitative research is a research process to understand human or social phenomena by creating a comprehensive and complex picture that can be presented in words, reporting detailed views obtained from informant sources, and carried out in a natural setting. Qualitative research is a very important tool in the social sciences and humanities. This approach provides the ability to explore and understand more complex social phenomena in greater depth. An interview is a communication between two or more parties, with one party as the interviewer and the other as the interviewee, to obtain answers related to the

research objectives. Observation is the process of direct observation of research objects to collect data [14].

Documentation is the process of collecting, investigating, and providing documents that function as a source of information that is useful for gaining knowledge and sharing with interested parties. Data analysis in qualitative research can be done before, during, and after the research is conducted. The analysis process starts from the planning stage with an understanding of the theoretical framework. During research, analysis may occur simultaneously with data collection. After the research was completed, data analysis was carried out in more depth, including processing and compiling findings from all the data collected. This data analysis follows the Miles & Huberman interactive analysis model which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. These stages ensure a reliable conclusion [14].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Understanding Morals and Personality

The definition of morals in Arabic can be interpreted as "الأخلاق" (al-akhlaq), which refers to behavior, actions, and habits that follow the ethical values and norms that apply in society [15]. "Morals" according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) are things related to morals or ethics (values that regulate human behavior). Morals are one aspect of development that must be stimulated in children from an early age [16]. Morals can also refer to the overall system of values that regulate human behavior. Morals come from mores (Latin) which means habits or customs. Moral behavioral life means behavior that follows the moral code of a social group, moral behavior is controlled by moral concepts and behavioral regulations that become habits for members of a culture [17]. In a broader context, morals in Arabic include the extent to which a person can internalize and implement ethical principles that are generally accepted by his society [18].

Moral behavior reflects an individual's awareness of their moral responsibility towards themselves, others, and the surrounding environment. It involves responsible decision-making, self-restraint, and a fair attitude in interactions with others. Furthermore, the concept of morals in Arabic is also closely related to the development of good character and personality. It encourages the development of noble qualities, such as patience, humility, honesty, loyalty, and forgiveness. Strong morals form the basis for creating healthy social relations, harmony in society, and sustainability in the development of civilization [19]. In other words, this broad understanding of morals in Arabic involves a comprehensive view of individual behavior, actions, and habits that are in line with the ethical values and norms that apply in society. In practice, morals play an important role in shaping individual character and influencing social interactions and the collective progress of a community.

Morals are a concept that is closely related to ethics and culture, and forms patterns of human behavior that are considered good or bad by society [20]. So, it can be said that etymologically, morals are a set of values, norms, or principles that are used as guides or guidance in human behavior, which are inherited and learned from the surrounding social and cultural environment. In this sense, morals are not only an important part of the formation of individual character but are also the main factor that determines the social norms and values that exist in society. Morals form the basis for recognizing what is right and wrong, good and bad, and shape a person's overall character or personality which has an impact on their behavior and interactions with the surrounding environment [21]. Therefore, morals are an important key in the formation of individuals who have good character and uphold the values held by society as a whole and are an important factor in the formation of a civilized and civilized society. In this context, morals have a huge influence on the formation and development of individual identity and the collective identity of society.



## Personality

Personality is the totality of individual characteristics that play a role in shaping and influencing a person's thought patterns, behavior, and interactions with the environment around them. Pervin also said that personality is a concept that continues to develop throughout time, influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors that interact with each other [22]. Personality is a person's life as a whole, individual, unique, his ability to survive, open up, and gain experience [23]. Personality according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) edition V: Personality; identity and Individual; person.

So it can be said that etymologically, personality is a very complex and multi-dimensional concept that refers to the characteristics, traits, and behavior of individuals that shape their identity as humans [24]. Personality does not only include physical aspects but also includes various psychological aspects, such as various individual thought patterns, emotions, actions, values, and preferences. The process of personality formation involves complex interactions between internal and external factors [25]. The process of personality formation involves very complex interactions and mutual influence between internal and external factors. Internal factors include genetic predisposition, innate thought patterns, and cognitive and emotional development related to the individual himself. Meanwhile, external factors include the influence of the social environment, culture, family, education, and life experiences which shape a person's understanding and understanding of themselves and the world around them. Personality is the result of a continuous and complex process, involving dynamic interactions between these factors throughout the individual's life span [26]. This includes the formation and development of identity, development of values and morals, adaptation to situations and changes, and improvement of social and emotional skills that are useful in interactions with other people. In a broader context, personality is the main basis for shaping the way individuals view the world, make decisions, behave, and interact in various life contexts. Each individual has a unique and different personality, which influences the way they respond and adapt to situations and challenges faced throughout life [27]. Therefore, it can be concluded that personality is a very broad and complex concept, involving various psychological aspects and interactions between internal and external factors. A deep understanding of personality helps us understand the uniqueness of each individual and contributes to self-development, healthy social relationships, and sustainable growth.

Internal factors that influence personality include innate predispositions, namely traits that a person has since birth. For example, an individual may tend to be more introverted or extroverted, tend to be organized or creative, and so on. Another internal factor that influences personality is the life experiences experienced by the individual, both positive and negative experiences [28]. This life experience can shape an individual's perspective and way of thinking.

On the other hand, external factors that influence personality include the social environment faced by individuals, such as family, school, living environment, peers, and work environment. This factor can influence an individual's perspective, attitudes, and behavior towards their environment. Apart from that, culture and norms that apply in society can also influence the formation of a person's personality.

As a very complex concept, personality has many theories that describe the process of personality formation. One famous theory is the psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud, which describes personality as consisting of three main structures, namely the id, ego, and superego. Other theories, such as cognitive, humanistic, and sociocultural theories, also provide a deeper understanding of how personality is formed.

In everyday life, personality is very important because it can influence social interactions and relationships between individuals. A good and positive personality can have a positive impact on the individual and the surrounding environment, while a bad personality can cause conflict and problems in social interactions. Therefore, maintaining

and developing a positive personality is very important to achieve success in life. A good and positive personality, such as honesty, empathy, friendliness, patience, and an understanding attitude, can create a healthy social climate, mutual trust, and mutual support. Individuals with this positive personality tend to be able to establish harmonious relationships, build strong partnerships, and influence the environment around them in a positive way. Conversely, bad personalities, such as egoism, dishonesty, arrogance, hatred, and intolerance, can cause conflict, tension, and problems in social interactions. Individuals with this negative personality often have difficulty building healthy relationships, contributing to teams, or achieving success in life. Therefore, maintaining and developing a positive personality is very important to achieve success and prosperity in life. It involves ongoing self-development, self-reflection, as well as awareness of the influence and impact of our behavior on others. By reinforcing positive values and practicing behaviors that align with a good personality, we can create an environment that is harmonious, supportive, and full of success for ourselves and those around us.

In a broader context, awareness of the importance of a good personality also has implications for the formation of a better culture and society. When individuals with positive personalities interact and collaborate, they can form more inclusive patterns of behavior, promoting the values of justice, equality, and mutual respect [29]. In the long term, this has the potential to create broader social change and achieve sustainable progress in society. Thus, awareness of the importance of maintaining and developing a positive personality becomes the basis for individuals to face challenges, achieve success, and build meaningful relationships in everyday life.

#### **Implementation of Project Activities at SMP N 40 Purworejo**

At SMP Negeri 40 Purworejo, there is a project program that is attracting attention, namely the Local Food and Voice of Democracy project, which aims to increase students' awareness of the importance of local food and democracy in everyday life, as well as providing opportunities for students to actively participate in activities democracy and promoting local food in the school environment and surrounding communities, thus involving students in a positive movement that has a good impact on the environment and surrounding communities, as well as forming students' characters who have integrity and care about the environment and society.



**Figure 1. P5 project activities at SMPN 40 Purworejo**

The Local Food Project is an activity or project that aims to increase the production and use of quality local food and support the food independence of a region. This project aims to increase public awareness about the importance of consuming local food, improve the quality and productivity of local food production, and increase the income of local farmers and food craftsmen [30]. One of the main goals of the Local Food Project is to increase public awareness about the importance of consuming local food. Through

education and campaigns, this project aims to open people's insight into the benefits and nutritional value contained in local food, as well as awaken a sense of pride and appreciation for local culinary and cultural heritage [31]. With increasing public awareness, it is hoped that there will be a shift in consumption behavior towards prioritizing local food, which in turn can have a positive impact on the local economy and the environment. In addition, the Local Food Project also focuses on improving the quality and productivity of local food production. This involves various efforts, such as providing training and technical guidance for farmers in implementing sustainable agricultural practices, using modern technology, and diversifying local food products. In this way, the project aims to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of the local agricultural sector, as well as produce local food that is high quality, safe, and following food safety standards. Furthermore, the Local Food Project also focuses on increasing the income of local farmers and food craftsmen. Through various strategies, such as developing effective distribution networks, smart marketing, and forming cooperatives or joint business groups, this project aims to increase market access for local food products and provide fair added value for local producers. Thus, this project has the potential to improve the standard of living of local farmers and food craftsmen, reduce economic inequality, and encourage sustainable local economic growth. Overall, the Local Food Project has a strategic role in building a sustainable food system, maintaining food diversity, and strengthening a region's food independence. By increasing the production, utilization, and added value of quality local food, it is hoped that the community can enjoy positive health, economic, and environmental benefits.

At SMP N 40 Purworejo this local food project was carried out for two weeks, in the first week students explained the concept of local food such as the origin of the name of the food, then the stages of making the food, and what processes must be followed to get the food. Then in the second week, students accompanied by their supervising teacher carry out their first practice in making this food. After carrying out experiments in making food, students created a cheap market concept to market their products, the marketing targets of which were teachers who were not part of the project coordinator and upperclassmen. After the activity is finished, students make an activity report.

Entering the next project, namely the democratic voice project. The Voice of democracy project is an activity or program that aims to increase students' understanding and participation in the democratic process in the school environment [32]. This project involves students in various activities, such as the election of the student council president, the election of class representatives, open discussions on social and political issues, as well as general election simulations. By involving students in this activity, it is hoped that they can better understand the importance of active participation in the democratic process and can develop the attitudes and skills needed in democratic life [33]. In its implementation, the Voice of Democracy Project invites students to be actively involved in various activities that illustrate and practice democratic principles in an educational context. One of the activities carried out is the election of the chairman of the Intra-School Student Organization (OSIS), where students are allowed to be involved in the process of selecting and forming leaders who represent their interests. In addition, the project also organizes the election of class representatives, which allows students to have an active role in expressing their aspirations and needs. In addition to elections, the Democratic Voices Project also engages students in open discussions about social and political issues relevant to their lives. These discussions provide a platform for students to share views, ideas, and solutions regarding these issues. Through inclusive, fact-based dialogue, students can develop a deeper understanding of different perspectives and discuss the implications of decisions taken in a democratic context. Furthermore, this project also involves students in a general election simulation, where they can experience and understand the real election process. In this simulation, students play the roles of voters, candidates, and election committees, so they can directly understand important aspects such as campaigns, debates, voting processes, and vote counting. In this way,



students can experience the dynamics of democracy directly and understand how important voting rights and active participation are in the democratic process. Through participation in the Democratic Voice Project, it is hoped that students can develop democratic attitudes, such as respecting differences of opinion, respecting individual rights, being able to dialogue constructively, and accepting decisions taken based on the majority. In addition, this project also aims to develop communication, leadership, cooperation, and decision-making skills that are important in the context of democratic life.

At SMP N 40 Purworejo, the Vote for Democracy project was implemented in two weeks. In its implementation, students have explained the meaning of democracy, the formation of a polling station committee, the formation of a success team, the construction of voting booths, demonstrations, a campaign against abstaining from voting, and the election of student council leaders. Then, after being appointed by the student council president, he appoints class representatives to serve as the Class Consultative Council (MPK) whose job is to act as a mouthpiece for the students and then at the end of the Voice of Democracy project, the students make an activity report which is guided directly by their homeroom teacher.

### **Implementation of Project Activities at Sultan Agung Purworejo Middle School**

At Sultan Agung Purworejo Middle School, the local cultural project carried out is studying and understanding the book *Ngudi Susila* by K.H. Mustofa Bisri which includes local wisdom and religious values. Apart from that, the school also held a democratic voice project which allowed students to participate in the election of IPNU and IPPNU chairs and voice their aspirations democratically. Both projects have the aim of developing students' morals and personalities, as well as increasing their love and concern for local culture and democracy as an important government system for the nation.



**Figure 2. Ngudi Susila project activities at Sultan Agung Purworejo Middle School**

*Ngudi Susila* is a collection of poetry by K.H. Mustofa Bisri which contains teachings about peaceful, dignified, and meaningful human life. The poems in *Ngudi Susila* emphasize the importance of values such as simplicity, hard work, justice, togetherness, and belief in God [34]. This work is one of the local Javanese cultural heritages which has a big influence on people's lives in the Central Java region [35]. In this case, the poems contained in *Ngudi Susila* have a strong focus on the importance of values that are highly valued in Javanese culture, such as simplicity, hard work, justice, togetherness, and belief in God. These poems are not just decorative words, but they invite readers to reflect on these values and apply them in everyday life. More than just a collection of literary works, *Ngudi Susila* is a very significant local Javanese cultural heritage. His work has had a significant influence on people's lives in the Central Java region. The poems in *Ngudi*

Susila are not only enjoyed by writers or poetry lovers but have also become a source of inspiration and guidance for many people in living their lives.

By using beautiful language and distinctive symbols, K.H. Mustofa Bisri can convey messages of wisdom and local wisdom that are relevant to modern times. The poems in Ngudi Susila teach values that can help individuals and society achieve a more harmonious, meaningful, and dignified life.

The Ngudi Susila project at Sultan Agung Middle School ran for two weeks, during its implementation students were explained the meaning contained in it. Apart from that, students are also taught how to write and read Arabic pegon. Arabic Pegon is a writing system that combines Arabic letters with Javanese script [36]. The opening section of the book is in the form of the pronunciation bismillaahir-rahmaanirrahiim using Arabic letters. Below it are two lines of the Prophet SAW's blessings, shalaatullaahi maa laa hat kawaakib – on the first line – 'ala ahmadu khairi man rakibannajaib – on the second line. It seems that these two lines of the prayer are the key to the songs below. This shalawat also seems to be a line of verse that is repeated over and over again. Still, in the opening section, below the 2 lines of shalawat, there are 24 lines of poetry in Arabic pegon letters [37]. After students were explained about the book, students were also introduced to the author's biography through a short video. Then students are directed to make a report and then read the results of the report in front of the class. The results are assessed by teachers related to subjects such as arts and culture, Javanese language, and Islamic religious education.

Entering the second program, namely the democratic voice project, the democratic voice project is an activity or program that aims to increase students' understanding and participation in the democratic process in the school environment. This project involves students in various activities, such as the election of the student council president, the election of class representatives, open discussions on social and political issues, as well as general election simulations. By involving students in this activity, it is hoped that they can better understand the importance of active participation in the democratic process and can develop the attitudes and skills needed in democratic life [38]. This project engages students in a variety of activities aimed at strengthening their understanding of the basic principles of democracy and providing practical experience in democratic processes. One of the activities carried out in this project is the election of the student council president and class representatives, where students are allowed to take an active role in selecting their leaders through a democratic election process. In addition, the project also includes open discussions about social and political issues relevant to students' lives. These discussions provide a platform for students to share views, understand different points of view, and develop critical thinking and argumentation skills needed in the democratic process.

In addition, the Suara Democracy project can also involve election simulations, where students can experience and understand the election process firsthand. Through these simulations, students can understand the steps involved in the democratic process, such as voter registration, campaigning, debates, and voting, so they can have a better understanding of how democracy functions.

In this Voice of democracy project activity, Sultan Agung Middle School held a simulation of the election of the chairman of IPNU and IPPNU. The IPNU-IPPNU student organization is one of the autonomous bodies of the Nahdlatul Ulama community organization which operates in the student and youth sphere and aims to produce NU cadres [39]. IPNU-IPPNU has a central role in forming and strengthening Islamic, nationalist, and national identity among students. Through various programs and activities, this organization seeks to increase understanding and love for the moderate and inclusive teachings of the Islamic religion, as well as encourage the development of leadership, social skills, and intellect among NU students. Apart from that, IPNU-IPPNU

is also committed to producing NU cadres who are qualified and responsible in society. By prioritizing character education, a deep understanding of religion, and awareness of an active role in social development, this organization seeks to produce a young generation who has social awareness, justice, tolerance, and a passion for contributing to various sectors of life. As an autonomous body from NU, IPNU-IPPNU adheres to religious, national, and humanitarian principles. This organization is committed to playing a role in maintaining unity, tolerance, and harmony between religious communities in Indonesia. Through da'wah, social and community empowerment activities, IPNU-IPPNU strives to be an agent of change that has a positive impact on society and strengthens NU's existence and contribution to building the nation. To achieve these goals, IPNU-IPPNU develops various educational programs, training, discussions, and social and cultural activities that involve the active participation of its members. This organization also collaborates with various parties, including educational institutions, government, and social institutions, to expand its reach and impact in meeting the needs of students and society at various levels. In this way, IPNU-IPPNU acts as a forum for NU students and youth to develop their potential, increase their understanding of religion, and contribute to building a better society.

This project also takes up to two weeks, this project begins with an introduction to the meaning of democracy, an introduction to IPNU and IPPNU, election simulation, formation of a polling station committee, construction of voting booths and other supporting equipment, demonstration simulation, anti-voting campaign, making democracy posters, conveying the vision mission, candidate debate and closed with student reports. After the chairmanship of IPNU and IPPNU was elected, MAKESTA (Member Loyalty Night) was held and the chairmanship of IPNU and IPPNU was inaugurated. Makesta is an abbreviation for Member Loyalty Period. Makesta activities are the most basic cadre formation in IPNU IPPNU. This activity is usually held by IPNU IPPNU at the Village or Branch level [40]. In the context of Makesta activities, cadre formation is considered a very important initial and basic step in forming the personality and developing the potential of IPNU and IPP members.

### **Effectiveness of Implementing the Voice of Democracy Project in Efforts to Develop Student Morals and Personalities at SMP N 40 and SMP Sultan Agung Purworejo**

In implementing this project, each school has a project that is different from other schools. This is because each school has goals that must be achieved according to the needs of the school. In implementing this project, can be said to be successful if the success criteria are met. To evaluate the effectiveness of research, previously established success criteria can be used. These success criteria can be improved performance, increased productivity, or improved product or service quality. In using success criteria, researchers can assess how much influence the variables studied have on achieving the success criteria that have been set [41]. In assessing the effectiveness of research, it is important to measure the impact produced by the variables studied against the established success criteria. For example, if research is conducted to improve the performance of an organization, researchers can analyze the extent to which the implementation of the research results affects the desired performance improvement. This can be done by comparing performance data before and after implementing the research results, as well as carrying out statistical analysis to measure significant differences.

Apart from that, researchers can also use various other evaluation methods, such as surveys, interviews, or direct observation, to collect data regarding changes that occur after implementing research results. For example, if the research aims to improve the quality of customer service, researchers can conduct customer satisfaction surveys before and after the implementation of the research results to measure the changes that occur. By considering previously established success criteria and analyzing the influence of the variables studied on achieving these criteria, researchers can objectively evaluate the effectiveness of their research. This evaluation is important to ensure that the research has

a significant impact and provides the expected benefits following the previously established objectives.

### **Regenerate Response**

Concerning this basis, SMP N 40 Purworejo has criteria to achieve, namely aspects of cooperation, creativity, and responsibility. Efforts to develop the morals and personality of SMP N 40 students can be said to be successful if:

1. Students can work together well. In practice, this activity has gone well because every step taken by the group in working together is guided directly by the teacher so that the cooperation aspect is fulfilled.
2. Students apply creativity in learning to produce innovative and effective solutions to overcoming the problems they face. In practice, students are not yet fully creative, because in practice there is still stimulus provided by the teacher. This is of course not following students' independence in creativity.
3. Shiva can take responsibility well. In practice, students can be responsible for each assignment, this is because the main teacher and related teachers directly guide these activities, so that students can properly complete their assignments.

Meanwhile, the success criteria applied to Sultan Agung Purworejo Middle School are honesty, activity, and responsibility. Efforts to develop the morals and personality of students at Sultan Agung Middle School can be said to be successful if:

1. Students can act honestly. In practice, students have applied the value of honesty, such as in vote counting, assignments, and submitting data. This can work because students have previously gained an understanding of honesty given by Islamic Religious Education and Character teachers. This teacher is also the coordinator of the implementation of the democratic voice project module at Sultan Agung Purworejo Middle School.
2. Students play an active role in activities. In practice, students are not yet fully active in carrying out their duties, they still depend on the opinions of their friends and directions from their supervisor. This does not follow the desired active criteria.
3. Students can be responsible for their assignments. In practice, students can be responsible for each assignment, this is because the main teacher and related teachers directly guide these activities, so that students can properly complete their assignments.

### **Analysis**

The integration of moral and personality development within the independent curriculum in Indonesian junior high schools reflects a significant alignment with the goals of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4: Quality Education, and Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. This study, conducted at SMP Negeri 40 and SMP Sultan Agung in Purworejo, demonstrates how project-based learning can serve as a transformative educational approach to instill ethical values and strong personal character in students.

At SMP Negeri 40 Purworejo, student morality and personality have been significantly enhanced through democratic engagement and practical life skills. Projects such as the democratic elections for OSIS and MPK, alongside the local food processing initiatives, not only foster leadership and collaboration but also reinforce responsibility and civic awareness—skills that are critical in achieving inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4). The exposure to democratic practices also cultivates a sense of justice and institutional participation (SDG 16), essential for nurturing future leaders.

Similarly, SMP Sultan Agung emphasizes moral and personality growth through culturally rooted projects. The election of student leaders in IPNU and IPPNU fosters democratic awareness, while the "Kitab Ngudi Susilo" cultural project reinforces local wisdom, respect for heritage, and ethical living. These approaches align education with sustainable cultural development, contributing to a well-rounded student identity.

The qualitative analysis, using observation, interviews, and documentation, reveals that these project-based methods succeed in shaping student behavior and character in real-life settings. By engaging in meaningful and relevant projects, students can internalize moral principles such as honesty, respect, cooperation, and social responsibility. This curriculum model not only supports national education objectives but also mirrors the SDGs' call to develop resilient individuals prepared to address global challenges through local action. The real-world applications of these projects empower students to act ethically and empathetically in diverse situations. In conclusion, the implementation of project-based learning within the independent curriculum has proven effective in advancing moral and personality development in both schools. When framed within the SDGs, such initiatives highlight the role of education in fostering inclusive, just, and sustainable communities through the nurturing of morally grounded youth.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of project-based learning through the independent curriculum at SMP Negeri 40 and SMP Sultan Agung Purworejo demonstrates a significant impact on students' moral and personality development, aligning with the values promoted by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). At SMP Negeri 40 Purworejo, the "Local Food" and "Voice of Democracy" projects have fostered students' awareness of environmental and social responsibilities. These initiatives encourage active participation in democratic practices and promote the importance of local food sustainability within the school and broader community. The criteria of cooperation, creativity, and responsibility serve as a framework for character building. While students have shown commendable cooperation and responsibility, the creativity aspect still requires further development to ensure students' independence and innovation grow without relying heavily on teacher prompts. Meanwhile, at SMP Sultan Agung Purworejo, the "Kitab Ngudi Susila" project integrates local cultural and religious values, guided by the teachings of K.H. Mustofa Bisri. This is complemented by a democratic project that allows students to engage in real electoral processes for IPNU and IPPNU leadership. The criteria of honesty, activeness, and responsibility guide the character development efforts at the school. Students have successfully demonstrated honesty and responsibility; however, active engagement remains an area for improvement, as some students still depend on peers and teacher directions rather than initiating tasks independently. Both schools have effectively linked educational content with real-life experiences, enabling students to internalize moral values and build strong personal character. These educational efforts not only prepare students to face future challenges but also reflect the spirit of the SDGs by fostering inclusive, ethical, and socially responsible individuals. Thus, moral and personality development through project-based learning is a strategic approach to realizing quality education that empowers students as agents of change in their communities—an essential contribution to achieving sustainable and just societies.

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### Author Contribution

William Jasson Ngangi led the conceptual framework, data collection, and analysis of moral and personality development about the SDGs. Mukh Nursikin contributed to the theoretical foundation and contextual analysis of Kohlberg's theory. Badrus Zaman assisted in field observations, interviews, and the alignment of findings with project-based learning outcomes. Muhammad K. Ridwan provided critical insights from international perspectives, edited the manuscript, and ensured its academic rigour. All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the version to be published. This research is a collaborative effort that reflects the shared expertise of all contributors.

### Conflicts of Interest

This research was carried out to increase insight and deepen knowledge, as well as improve abilities in critical thinking and analysis. This research was not carried out for any practical purposes, but to increase knowledge and abilities in various fields of science. Thus, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of science and technology, as well as increase capabilities in various fields of science.

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