

Improving Students' Learning Motivation through Active Learning Using the Role-Playing Method in Civics Education (PPKn) Learning

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Abstract

This study aims to improve students' learning motivation in the subject of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) through the application of an Active Learning approach using the Role-Playing method in Grade VII at SMP Negeri 18 Depok. The study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design using the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, conducted over three cycles consisting of four stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The research subjects were 40 seventh-grade students in the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected through collaborator observation sheets, learning motivation questionnaires, interviews with collaborators and students, as well as documentation of classroom activities. Data analysis techniques included quantitative descriptive analysis to calculate the average percentage of motivation scores in each cycle, and qualitative descriptive analysis to interpret data from observations, interviews, and field notes. The results showed a consistent increase in students' learning motivation from 48.3% (pre-cycle) to 71.6% (Cycle I), 76.9% (Cycle II), and 81.4% (Cycle III). The distribution of motivation levels also shifted from predominantly low/moderate to high/very high by the end of the final cycle. Qualitative findings revealed improvements in students' speaking confidence, cooperation, self-assurance, and understanding of civic values through role-play simulation activities.

Kata kunci: active learning, learning motivation, role playing.

1 INTRODUCTION

Learning motivation is one of the most fundamental determinants of success in the educational process. It functions as an internal driving force that influences students' persistence, participation, and overall academic achievement (Keller, 2010). From an educational psychology perspective, motivation not only serves as the initial fuel for learning behavior but also as the sustaining energy that supports long-term learning consistency. Motivated students tend to be more resilient in facing difficulties, more open to challenges, and more capable of maintaining focused attention on academic tasks. They learn not merely to obtain grades, but because they understand the meaning and value of the learning process itself.

In the context of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn), motivation carries a deeper and more strategic significance. PPKn is not merely about transferring cognitive knowledge regarding the constitution, law, or political systems, but it also aims to shape students' national character from an early age. This includes fostering values of diversity, patriotism, civic responsibility, and the willingness to live harmoniously within pluralism (Saryono et al., 2024). An effective PPKn learning process should ideally address the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of students in an integrated manner, so that civic

values are not only memorized but also internalized as guiding principles for behavior and action in social life.

However, the reality in the field shows that Civics Education (PPKn) learning still largely takes place in a conventional manner. Teachers often serve as the central source of information, while students remain passive listeners. The learning process tends to emphasize memorization of concepts rather than the internalization of values. Classroom interactions are mostly one-way and offer limited space for dialogue, leaving students with few opportunities to explore learning experiences in a contextual and meaningful way (Saryono et al., 2022). As a result, many students feel bored, unenthusiastic, and emotionally disengaged from PPKn lessons. Learning activities that are supposed to cultivate a sense of nationalism instead lose their spirit, reduced to mere formal routines with a purely cognitive orientation.

To address these issues, a learning approach is needed that can foster active engagement and a sense of ownership among students toward their learning process. One promising approach is Active Learning. This approach positions students as the primary agents of learning, rather than mere recipients of information. Through Active Learning, students are encouraged to think critically, discuss, collaborate, solve problems, and reflect on their own learning experiences (Armbruster et al., 2009). When students are given the opportunity to actively participate, they begin to perceive learning as relevant to their lives, which in turn enhances their intrinsic motivation to learn.

One effective form of Active Learning implementation in Civics Education (PPKn) is the Role-Playing method. This method engages students in enacting social roles within simulated situations that mirror real-life civic experiences (Wulandari, 2020). In role-playing activities, students do not merely read or listen about values such as justice, tolerance, or responsibility; they experience them through processes of decision-making, debate, and collaboration, just as they would in real social life. Through these experiential activities, students gain a deeper understanding of civic values, as they directly encounter and reflect upon the social dynamics that accompany those values.

Psychologically, Role Playing has also been proven effective in fulfilling the four key components of Keller's ARCS motivational model (2010): Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The dramatized and creative nature of role-playing activities captures students' attention. The role scenarios, which are derived from real-life social issues, make the learning process relevant. Students' confidence develops gradually as they gain opportunities to perform and practice their roles, and they experience satisfaction when successfully presenting their performances before their peers. These four components mutually reinforce one another, forming a foundation for sustained learning motivation.

In line with this, Saryono (2024) emphasizes that Civics Education (PPKn) in the era of Digitalization 5.0 requires innovative strategies that not only impart knowledge but also foster national character through participatory learning. Education in the 21st century should not be limited to developing students' cognitive abilities; it must also cultivate soft skills and character traits that enable them to live harmoniously within a multicultural society. Values such as mutual cooperation or *gotong royong*, tolerance, responsibility, and patriotism can only flourish when students engage in a learning process that provides real opportunities for active participation and value reflection.

On the other hand, Harini et al. (2024) remind us that the digital era poses significant challenges for the world of education. The rapid pace of technological change requires teachers and educational institutions to continuously innovate in order to keep learning relevant. Without innovation, learning can easily lose its meaning, as it no longer aligns with the ways of thinking and learning characteristic of the digital generation. Therefore, it is essential to develop learning models that are not only academically effective but also adaptive to the changing times.

Building upon these conceptual foundations and empirical conditions, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Role-Playing method in enhancing students' learning motivation in Civics Education (PPKn). It is expected that the findings of this research will

make a meaningful contribution to the development of a more participatory, contextual, and meaningful learning model, enabling PPKn to truly serve as a platform for nurturing intelligent, critical, and character-driven young citizens.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) that employs the spiral model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). This model emphasizes a continuous process of instructional improvement through four main stages in each cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis et al., 2014). These four stages do not stand independently but form an interconnected and recurring cycle, allowing teachers to systematically identify learning problems, design solutions, implement actions, and evaluate their impact directly within the classroom setting.

The subjects of this study were 40 seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 18 Depok during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The class was selected based on preliminary findings indicating that students' learning motivation in Civics Education (PPKn) was still low and tended to be passive. The research was conducted in three action cycles, implemented gradually and systematically. In Cycle I, the focus was on introducing the basic concept of the Role-Playing method, dividing students into small groups, and providing simple role-playing exercises to help them become accustomed to performing. In Cycle II, the teacher diversified the role-play scenarios, distributed roles more evenly among group members, and extended the practice time to enhance student readiness. In Cycle III, the teacher emphasized improving the quality of group performances, set clear assessment standards, further enriched the variety of scenarios, and facilitated value-reflection activities at the end of the lesson to deepen students' understanding of their learning experiences.

The data collection instruments included collaborator observation sheets, a learning motivation questionnaire categorized from very low to very high, interview guidelines for collaborators and students, and documentation of the learning process. Data were analyzed using both quantitative descriptive methods, by calculating the average percentage of motivation scores for each cycle, and qualitative descriptive methods, involving the stages of data reduction, display, and verification based on observation results, interviews, and field notes..

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Quantitatively, the results of the study showed a significant increase in students' learning motivation from one cycle to the next. During the pre-cycle stage, the average level of students' learning motivation was only 48.3%, which fell into the low category. This figure reflected the students' initial condition tending to be passive, less enthusiastic, and showing minimal engagement in the learning process. After the implementation of the Role-Playing method in Cycle I, the average motivation score increased to 71.6%, which is categorized as high. This improvement indicates a positive change in students' learning behavior; they began to show greater interest in the material, maintained better focus during the teacher's explanation, and demonstrated a growing willingness to perform in small groups.

Table 4.9. Summary of Students' Learning Motivation Results in Each Cycle

Stage	Total Score	Maximum Score	Percentage (%)	Category
Pre-Cycle	1158	2400	48.3%	Low
Cycle I	1718	2400	71.6%	High
Cycle II	1846	2400	76.9%	High
Cycle III	1954	2400	81.4%	High

Improvements continued in Cycle II, where the average level of students' motivation increased to 76.9%. At this stage, most students demonstrated active participation in group activities, began to ask questions, and offered responses to their peers' opinions. The progress reached its peak in Cycle III, with students' average learning motivation rising to 81.4%, categorized as very high. At this point, no students remained in the low or very low categories. On the contrary, the majority consistently displayed full engagement, enthusiasm, and confidence when performing in front of the class.

Qualitatively, collaborator observations revealed a significant transformation in students' behavior. Students were not only active in discussions and group collaboration but also exhibited a growing sense of responsibility. Student interviews indicated that learning had become more enjoyable and made them feel more confident. Field notes further described the classroom atmosphere as increasingly lively, interactive, and conducive throughout each cycle highlighting the success of the Role-Playing method in fostering students' learning motivation.

3.2 Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the consistent implementation of the Role-Playing method effectively enhances students' learning motivation in Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn). This improvement occurred progressively across each action cycle—both quantitatively, through the steady increase in students' average motivation scores, and qualitatively, through observable changes in their learning behavior in the classroom. These findings confirm that Role Playing is one of the most effective Active Learning strategies for stimulating student engagement and fostering a more dynamic, collaborative, and meaningful learning environment.

Theoretically, the success of this method can be explained through the four key components of the ARCS model of learning motivation developed by Keller (2010): Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The first component, Attention, emphasizes the importance of capturing students' interest to maintain their focus during the learning process. In the implementation of the Role-Playing method, students' attention is naturally drawn because learning activities are presented in a dramatic, creative, and challenging simulation format. Instead of merely listening to the teacher's explanations, students are actively involved in performing specific characters or social roles. This approach sparks curiosity, emotional engagement, and greater enthusiasm, compared to conventional teaching methods that tend to be monotonous and teacher-centered.

The second component, Relevance, refers to the extent to which learning materials feel meaningful and applicable to students' real-life experiences. In Role Playing, the scenarios are drawn from social contexts familiar to students' everyday lives—for instance, simulations of class deliberations, debates about school regulations, or mini court sessions on environmental issues. This direct connection between the learning content and students' daily experiences helps them perceive that what they are learning has real value and

practical significance. When students discover personal meaning in what they learn, their intrinsic motivation increases significantly (Keller, 2010).

The third component, Confidence, relates to the development of students' belief in their ability to successfully complete learning tasks. In the Role-Playing method, teachers provide gradual opportunities for students to perform starting from simple roles and progressing to more complex ones. Through these progressive experiences, students are able to overcome fear or shyness when speaking in front of the class, build self-confidence, and develop the courage to take intellectual risks. This type of learning process indirectly fosters a growth mindset among students, reinforcing the belief that their abilities can improve through practice and experience.

The fourth component, Satisfaction, refers to the sense of fulfillment that arises after successfully completing a task. In Role-Playing-based learning, students experience intrinsic satisfaction when they are able to perform their roles effectively in front of their peers. They receive social recognition, praise, or appreciation from teachers and classmates, which reinforces their sense of accomplishment. This satisfaction encourages students to repeat the positive experience in future learning opportunities. Thus, the four components of the ARCS model are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, creating a sustained cycle of motivation—students feel motivated because learning is enjoyable, and they continue learning because they remain motivated.

These findings are consistent with those of Armbruster et al. (2009), which demonstrated that the active learning approach generally enhances students' positive attitudes and academic performance. In that study, students' active engagement in discussion, problem-solving, and simulation was shown to reduce learning fatigue, improve conceptual understanding, and strengthen critical thinking skills. Similarly, Sari and Putra (2024) found that the application of role-playing in Civics Education (PPKn) at the elementary school level significantly improved both the quality of the learning process and student participation. Wulandari (2020) also emphasized that civic education learning using a multimedia-based role-playing model effectively enhanced students' civic competencies, particularly in the areas of collaboration, responsibility, and communication skills. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with previous research, reinforcing the conclusion that the Role-Playing method is an effective strategy for improving student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.

In the Indonesian context, the success of implementing the Role-Playing method holds strong relevance to the goals of Civics Education (PPKn), which emphasize not only the mastery of knowledge but also the development of attitudes and national character. According to Saryono et al. (2024), PPKn serves as a strategic instrument for instilling national cultural values, patriotism, and tolerant attitudes from an early age. Through Role Playing, students do not merely listen to or read about these values, they practice them directly through simulated social interactions in the classroom. This approach accelerates the internalization of values, as students experience them as real-life situations rather than as abstract information, making learning more meaningful and transformative.

Furthermore, this method also addresses the challenge of low student interest in learning, which often results from the continued dominance of conventional teaching methods still widely used in Civics Education (PPKn) (Saryono et al., 2022). Traditional, lecture-based, and one-way instruction tends to make students passive, easily bored, and disconnected from real-life contexts. In contrast, the Role-Playing method fosters a participatory, dynamic, and enjoyable learning atmosphere, rekindling students' curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Classrooms that were once rigid and monotonous transform into interactive spaces filled with laughter, expression, and collaboration. In such an environment, learning motivation no longer needs to be externally imposed; it emerges naturally from within the students themselves, as they feel valued, engaged, and empowered to take an active role in their own learning process.

Harini et al. (2024) emphasize that the challenges of the digitalization era in education demand innovative approaches to learning management in order to remain relevant to the characteristics of the current generation. The digital generation tends to have a shorter

attention span, enjoys creative activities, and is more attracted to visual and collaborative learning experiences. The Role-Playing method naturally aligns with these characteristics, as it integrates visual, verbal, emotional, and social elements into the learning process. Consequently, the implementation of this method not only enhances learning motivation but also maintains the relevance of Civics Education (PPKn) in the midst of technological disruption, ensuring that civic learning remains engaging, meaningful, and suited to the needs of 21st-century learners.

In addition, the studies conducted by Harini and Adisel (2020) and Harini et al. (2019) revealed that motivation contributes significantly to normative commitment and educator performance, particularly among school principals. These findings implicitly reinforce the importance of learning management that fosters motivation, not only for students but also for teachers as facilitators of the learning process. When teachers observe their students being enthusiastic and actively engaged, they, in turn, become more inspired to develop their pedagogical creativity. Thus, enhancing students' learning motivation through the Role-Playing method can create a positive domino effect: students become more motivated, teachers become more innovative, and the overall learning climate becomes more conducive to meaningful educational experiences.

From the perspective of Classroom Action Research (CAR), the gradual increase in students' motivation across cycles also reflects the successful implementation of the reflective spiral principle, which is the hallmark of the Kemmis and McTaggart model (Kemmis et al., 2014). In this model, each action cycle serves as the foundation for designing improvements in the subsequent cycle through reflection based on field feedback. For example, during Cycle I, it was found that some students remained passive due to a lack of self-confidence. This finding then became the basis for making targeted improvements in Cycle II, such as redistributing roles, clarifying instructions, and extending practice time. As a result, student participation increased significantly. Moving into Cycle III, the teacher further enhanced the process by diversifying role-play scenarios, setting clear group performance standards, and emphasizing value reflection after each performance. This strategy of continuous, reflective improvement is the key factor that led to the consistent growth in students' learning motivation, demonstrating the effectiveness of the spiral model in fostering progressive pedagogical enhancement..

It is also important to note that Role Playing is not merely a tool for temporarily boosting motivation, but rather a means of developing students' social and emotional competencies. While working in groups, students learn to appreciate others' opinions, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and build solidarity all of which are essential civic skills. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, these competencies are vital for shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also emotionally and socially mature. Thus, enhancing learning motivation through Role Playing simultaneously reinforces the core mission of Civics Education (PPKn) to cultivate democratic, tolerant, and responsible citizens.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the success of the Role-Playing method in increasing students' learning motivation in PPKn is not coincidental, but the result of a synergy between participatory pedagogy, reflective action design, and the relevance of learning materials to students' developmental needs. These findings make a significant contribution to the ongoing innovation of Civics Education learning in schools and serve as compelling evidence that transforming teaching approaches can lead to meaningful changes in students' enthusiasm, engagement, and motivation to learn.

4 CONCLUSION

The results of this study affirm that the implementation of an Active Learning approach using the Role-Playing method has proven to be effective in increasing students' learning motivation in Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn). This improvement is evident not only quantitatively, through the rise in students' average motivation scores in each cycle, but also qualitatively, as reflected in their more active, enthusiastic, and confident learning

behavior. Students who were initially passive and reluctant to participate gradually developed the courage to perform, the ability to collaborate, and a sense of responsibility within their groups. They were no longer mere recipients of information but became active agents who constructed understanding through direct learning experiences.

The Role-Playing method successfully creates a joyful, contextual, and interactive learning atmosphere. Through simulated social roles, students not only learn civic concepts theoretically, but also experience them firsthand in situations that resemble real-life contexts. This experiential process strengthens the internalization of civic values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), tolerance, deliberation (*musyawarah*), and responsibility, which form the core of PPKn education. What was once a monotonous and disengaging lesson transforms into a creative and expressive space that sparks curiosity and intrinsic motivation.

Based on these findings, the Active Learning strategy through Role Playing is recommended for continuous implementation in Civics Education. This approach aligns with the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasizes the development of national character, collaborative skills, and critical thinking abilities. In a digital era filled with complex challenges, Civics Education must provide humanistic, participatory, and meaningful learning experiences to cultivate a young generation that is not only academically competent but also possesses a strong civic character as Indonesian citizens.

In light of the study's results, it is recommended that PPKn teachers continue to develop innovative learning strategies that place students at the center of the learning process, one of which is the sustained application of the Role-Playing method. Teachers should design contextual scenarios, ensure equal participation among all students, and provide reflection sessions after activities to help deeply internalize civic values. Furthermore, schools are encouraged to support this effort by organizing training programs and peer-sharing forums among teachers, thereby fostering a participatory, engaging, and relevant learning culture in Civics Education that meets the challenges of the digital era

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