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Integrating Islamic and Civic Education through Project-Based Learning for Digital Civility in Distance Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how a project-based model that integrates Islamic Religious Education, Pancasila Education, and Civic Education can foster digital civility among students of an Indonesian open university, and what limits the model faces in distance learning. A convergent mixed-methods case study was conducted in six pilot online tutorial classes (137 active students, 30 teams) at Universitas Terbuka from October to December 2024. Data came from design documents, tutors' class reports, project reports and outputs, tutorial completion records, and a reflection questionnaire answered by 28 students. Three findings emerged. First, the respondents reported clear understanding of the project and perceived improvements in applied understanding and critical thinking (M = 3.55 of 4); these are the perceptions of 28 respondents, not of the whole cohort. Second, integration of the three courses was uneven: in the most complete class, two of five teams combined an Islamic analysis, Pancasila values, and a civic action, and only one team reached an offline audience. Third, participation narrowed towards the end of the course, group discussion was the weakest-rated aspect, and only a third of teams documented a public output; working students' time constraints, geographic dispersion, and infrequent guidance explain much of this. The study contributes a conceptual model in which Islamic values provide the ethical foundation, Pancasila the national orientation, and civic education the framework for social action, together with five design principles for project-based learning in distance higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Most Indonesians now live part of their social life online. The national internet association reported that 79.5% of the population was connected in 2024 (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2024). The quality of that online life is a growing concern. Microsoft's Digital Civility Index, released in February 2021, placed Indonesia 29th of 32 countries and lowest in Asia, with hoaxes, hate speech, and discrimination among the risks respondents reported (Kompas, 2021).

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Studies of Indonesian users point in the same direction. A survey of 633 university students found medium levels of hoax-related behaviour and weak analytical thinking among about a third of them (Afdal et al., 2023), cyberbullying remains a documented problem among Indonesian adolescents (Bukhori et al., 2024), and social media algorithms have been shown to reinforce sectarian and tribal identities (Lim, 2017; Utami, 2019). For a plural country that treats social cohesion as part of national resilience, these patterns are a civic problem as well as a moral one.

This study uses the term digital civility for the quality of conduct that such problems put at risk. Building on work on digital citizenship and online civility (Choi, 2016; Dishon & Ben-Porath, 2018; Jones & Mitchell, 2016), we treat digital civility as five related dispositions: (1) polite and respectful communication; (2) responsibility for what one posts and shares; (3) verification of information before believing or spreading it; (4) tolerance towards people of different religions, ethnicities, and views; and (5) constructive participation in public life through digital media. Dishon and Ben-Porath (2018) argue that civility online is relational rather than a list of polite phrases: it involves a commitment to just dialogue, reaching a diverse audience around a shared goal, and mutual accountability. This relational view matters for education. Civility cannot be taught only as a rule to remember; it has to be practised with others.

Islamic education and civic education carry a direct responsibility for this practice. Law No. 12 of 2012 requires every undergraduate programme to teach Religious Education, Pancasila, and Civic Education (Republik Indonesia, 2012), and the Directorate General of Higher Education regulates these compulsory courses (Mata Kuliah Wajib Kurikulum, MKWK) (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). The three courses also share substance. Islamic teaching provides concrete norms for online conduct: verify news before acting on it (tabayyun, Q. al-Hujurat 49:6); do not ridicule or backbite others (Q. al-Hujurat 49:11–12); and recognise that human diversity exists so that people may know one another (Q. al-Hujurat 49:13). Each norm has a counterpart in Pancasila and in civic competence. Tabayyun corresponds to the citizen's responsibility in receiving and disseminating information; the prohibition of ridicule and ghibah (backbiting) expresses respect for human dignity, the core of the second principle of Pancasila, just and civilised humanity; and tolerance corresponds to the third principle, the unity of Indonesia, and to the motto Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity). Islamic education has long been understood as the formation of character and conduct, not only the transmission of knowledge (Halstead, 2004). Because Indonesian Muslims increasingly practise and discuss their religion through social media (Slama, 2018), religious education that ignores this space leaves an important part of students' moral lives unaddressed.

Project-based learning (PjBL) offers a way to turn these shared norms into practice. In PjBL, students work on a driving question over an extended period and produce public artefacts (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Meta-analyses and reviews report positive effects on achievement, engagement, and twenty-first-century skills (Almulla, 2020; Bell, 2010; Chen & Yang, 2019; Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Zhang & Ma, 2023), although the higher-education literature has concentrated on students' perceptions of PjBL more than on measured outcomes (Guo et al., 2020). In Indonesia, project-based civic education has strengthened students' civic literacy (Sukmayadi et al., 2025), project-based Islamic Religious Education has helped students apply Islamic values to contemporary issues (Herlina et al., 2025), and school projects under the Pancasila student profile have been used to develop digital citizenship (Oktariani, 2024). Research on religious moderation also recommends dialogic and experiential pedagogy across subjects (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Prasetyo et al., 2025).

Three gaps remain. First, these studies were conducted at campus-based institutions. Open and distance learning (ODL) students are dispersed, often employed, and connected mainly through asynchronous platforms, and online group projects in such settings are known to suffer from uneven participation and weak group relationships (Donelan & Kear, 2018, 2024; Kara et al., 2019). Second,

the three compulsory courses are usually studied separately, so we know little about how Islamic, Pancasila, and civic perspectives can be combined in one project. Third, few studies examine whether students actually use these perspectives in their projects, rather than whether they enjoyed the projects.

This study addresses these gaps through a pilot of project-based MKWK at Universitas Terbuka (UT), Indonesia's open university, which runs between 3,119 and 5,989 online tutorial classes of about 50 students each per semester for these courses (2022–2023 programme records). The pilot carried the theme Saos Bakso, an acronym for Santun Bermedsos, Berbakti Sosial ("civil on social media, devoted to social service"). We use the acronym only as the name of the pilot. The study was guided by three research questions:

RQ1. How was a project-based model integrating Islamic Religious Education, Pancasila, and Civic Education developed and enacted in UT's online tutorial system?

RQ2. How did students perceive the learning experience and their own skill development?

RQ3. To what extent did students' projects integrate Islamic, Pancasila, and civic perspectives, and what participation patterns and constraints shaped this integration?

Figure 1 presents the framework that guided the design and the analysis. The three courses play different but complementary roles. Islamic values provide the ethical foundation: they tell students why verification, respect, and tolerance are obligations. Pancasila provides the national orientation: it locates these obligations within the shared values of a plural nation. Civic education provides the framework for social action: it equips students to design and carry out an action that addresses a public problem. The five dispositions of digital civility are the meeting points of the three layers, and the PjBL cycle is the vehicle through which students move from analysis to action. Table 1 shows how each disposition was meant to be grounded in the three courses and expressed in project activities.

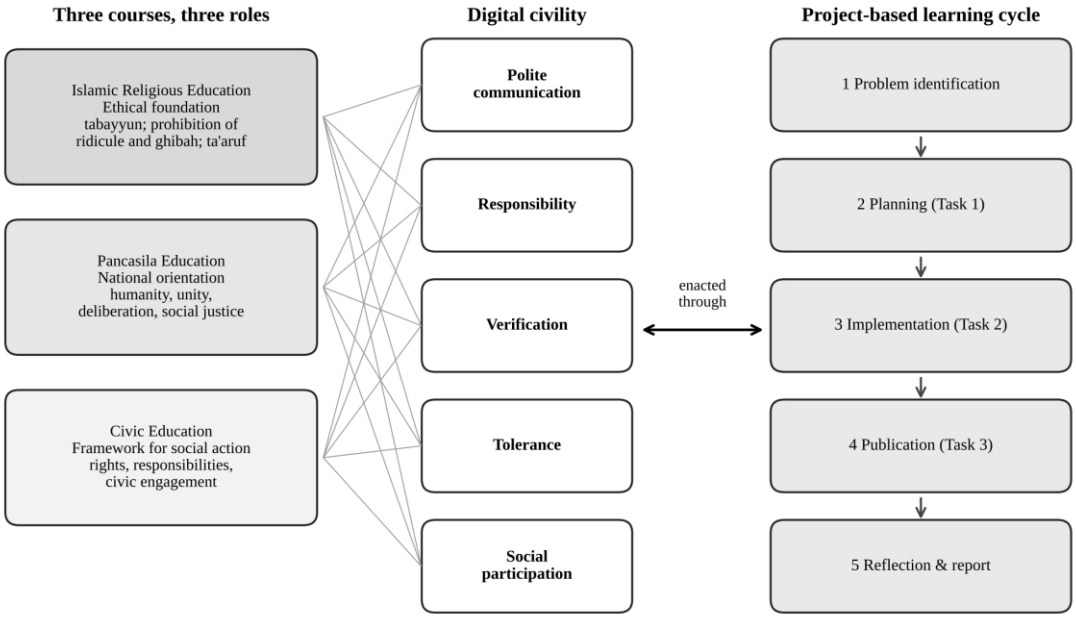


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: integrating Islamic, Pancasila, and civic perspectives for digital civility through project-based learning

Table 1. Grounding the five dispositions of digital civility in the three courses

Disposition	**Islamic value (ethical foundation)**	**Pancasila (national orientation)**	**Civic competence (social action)**	**Project activity**
Polite communication	Prohibition of ridicule and insulting nicknames (Q. 49:11)	Second principle: just and civilised humanity	Ethical public communication	Content free of insults; audience-appropriate language
Responsibility	Accountability for speech; avoiding *ghibah* (Q. 49:12)	Respect for human dignity	Responsible use of rights and freedoms	Original content; protecting the privacy of people in cases
Verification	*Tabayyun* (Q. 49:6)	Fourth principle: deliberation based on wisdom	Media and information literacy	Literature review and checking sources before production
Tolerance	*Ta'aruf*, knowing one another across difference (Q. 49:13)	Third principle; *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*	Respect for pluralism	Content promoting interreligious and intergroup harmony
Social participation	Enjoining good in public life (Q. 3:104)	Fifth principle: social justice	Civic engagement and community action	Publishing content; working with a beneficiary or partner

Source: Developed by the authors from the course learning outcomes and the implementation guideline (Sekarwinahyu et al., 2024).

METHODS

Design and model development

The study used a convergent mixed-methods case study design (Fetters et al., 2013) embedded in the development and first implementation of the model. A team of PAI, Pancasila, and Civic Education lecturers developed the model in 2024 under the Ministry's MKWK project-based learning grant (Table 2).

Table 2. Development of the model

Stage	Period	Activities and products
Needs analysis	Proposal stage, first half of 2024	Review of MKWK tutorial class numbers, national performance indicators on case- and project-based learning (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2021), and evidence on students' digital behaviour
Mapping of learning outcomes	July 2024	Team meeting (3 July 2024) comparing old and new course modules and course sub-outcomes for the three courses
Collaborative formulation of the theme	July 2024	Agreement on the shared theme and on a social media content project as the common output; workshop on semester learning plans with external resource persons (16 July 2024)
Design of project activities	July–September 2024	Semester learning plans, tutorial kits, tutorial materials, rubrics, and the implementation guideline (Sekarwinahyu et al., 2024)
Review of materials	July–October 2024	Each semester learning plan reviewed internally by a designated reviewer and approved by the head of programme; the implementation guideline reviewed by an expert resource person in an online review session (11 October 2024) using a structured instrument, followed by revision
Preparation of classes and tutors	September–October 2024	Master classes built in the LMS; tutor alignment session held before the tutorial began

Source: Meeting minutes, review documents, and programme report.

The semester learning plans were reviewed internally, and the implementation guideline was reviewed by an expert before the tutorial began. The expert review used an instrument covering four aspects: design and layout, quality of content, fit with learning practice, and quality of project evaluation. The guideline was revised on the basis of the feedback. This was a judgmental appraisal of the guideline, not a quantitative content validity study of the whole model, and its scores are not analysed here. The model is therefore presented as an expert-reviewed design in its first implementation, not as a fully validated model.

Classes, tutors, and treatment

Two pilot classes were opened for each course: PAI (MKWU4101), Pancasila (MKWN4110), and Civic Education (MKWN4109). The programme team assigned registered students to the pilot classes (capacity 25) and informed them of their participation. Two compositions were used deliberately: one class per course was heterogeneous, like regular UT classes, to test the model under normal conditions; the other grouped students from large cities by regional office (UT Daerah) to ease coordination and test whether regional grouping made team projects more feasible. For example, the regionally grouped Pancasila class consisted of students from the UT Medan regional office, all enrolled in the PAI study programme. In total, 137 students were active (20–25 per class). Each class formed five teams, giving 30 teams; in the heterogeneous classes, teams mixed students from different study programmes. Tutors were selected from lecturers at UT's head office (UT Pusat) who teach the respective courses, including at least one member of the development team. All tutors took part in an alignment session on the model before the tutorial began, and several team members had attended UT's February 2024 training on case- and project-based course design.

All six classes followed the same eight-session structure, theme, task sequence, assessment weights, and rubrics (Table 3). Three differences should be noted when interpreting the results: the course-specific focus of the projects; discussion assessment, which covered both group and class discussions in Pancasila and Civic Education but only class discussions in PAI; and one Pancasila class, which reported a single class-wide project instead of five team projects.

Data sources and analysis

Data comprised (a) design documents; (b) six tutors' class reports on active students, project titles, and challenges; (c) team project documents and a registry of outputs and public links (30 teams); (d) tutorial completion records, complete for one class; and (e) a reflection questionnaire administered from 28 November to 3 December 2024. Developed by the programme team, the questionnaire had 15 four-point Likert items (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) on the learning experience and perceived skill development, and six open-ended questions. Of the 137 active students, 28 responded (20.4%): 13 from PAI, 8 from Pancasila, and 7 from Civic Education classes. Nineteen respondents were enrolled in PAI study programmes. Data were anonymised before analysis.

Questionnaire data were analysed descriptively, with Cronbach's alpha (Taber, 2018), Wilcoxon signed-rank tests against the midpoint (2.5), and a Kruskal–Wallis test across courses. Open-ended responses were coded inductively and grouped into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006); two respondents who submitted identical texts were counted once (27 narratives). Project titles were classified thematically. To answer RQ3, the documents of the five teams in the most complete class were coded for three perspectives: an Islamic perspective (explicit use of Qur'anic, hadith, or Islamic ethical reasoning to analyse the issue), a Pancasila perspective (explicit reference to Pancasila principles or national values), and a civic action (a public action addressed to an audience or beneficiary). The strands were integrated in a joint display (Fetters et al., 2013).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Rq1: The Model As Designed And Enacted

The model connected the three courses through one theme and one project cycle while keeping each course's learning outcomes. In PAI, projects addressed interreligious harmony grounded in Islamic teachings on diversity; in Pancasila, the implementation of Pancasila values in social life; and in Civic Education, the cultivation of national values. In every course, the required output was original digital content uploaded to a public social media platform and tagged to the university's accounts, together with a written report. The guideline prohibited hate speech, ethnic or religious slurs, and pornography. Table 3 shows the enacted sequence.

Table 3. The enacted project sequence and assessment

Session	Stage	Main activities	Product (weight in tutorial score)
Pre-session	Orientation	Briefing; guideline and tutorial activity plan	–
1	Problem identification	Webinar 1; teams choose a problem under the shared theme	Discussion (15%, across sessions)
2–3	Planning	Webinar 2; title, background, objectives, outputs, schedule, roles	Task 1: project design (10%)
4–6	Implementation	Content production; contact with beneficiaries; tutor monitoring	Task 2: progress report (15%)
7	Publication	Webinar 3; presentation and publication of content	Task 3: public content link (25%)
8	Reflection and reporting	Webinar 4; reflection on process, values, and goals	Final report (30%); attendance (5%)

Source: Implementation guideline (Sekarwinahyu et al., 2024).

The design combined asynchronous activities with four synchronous webinars, a public lecture on using social media to promote national values, and a university radio programme introducing the model. The rubrics rewarded the public artefact and the planning and reflection around it. For Task 3, for example, 30 of 100 points were given to the fit between output and objectives and 30 to the creativity of presentation on social media. No rubric criterion, however, asked teams to show how they had used Islamic, Pancasila, or civic concepts. This gap matters for the findings under RQ3.

RQ2: Students' Perceptions

The 15 items were internally consistent ($\alpha = .93$; experience subscale $\alpha = .86$; skills subscale $\alpha = .88$). Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses. Across items, 93.1% of responses were agree or strongly agree. The overall mean was 3.55 (SD = .46), above the midpoint ($z = 4.64$, $p < .001$, $r = .88$), with no difference between courses (PAI M = 3.51, Pancasila M = 3.60, Civic Education M = 3.56; $H(2) = 0.24$, $p = .885$). These figures describe the views of 28 respondents, probably the more engaged students, and they are perceptions rather than measured outcomes.

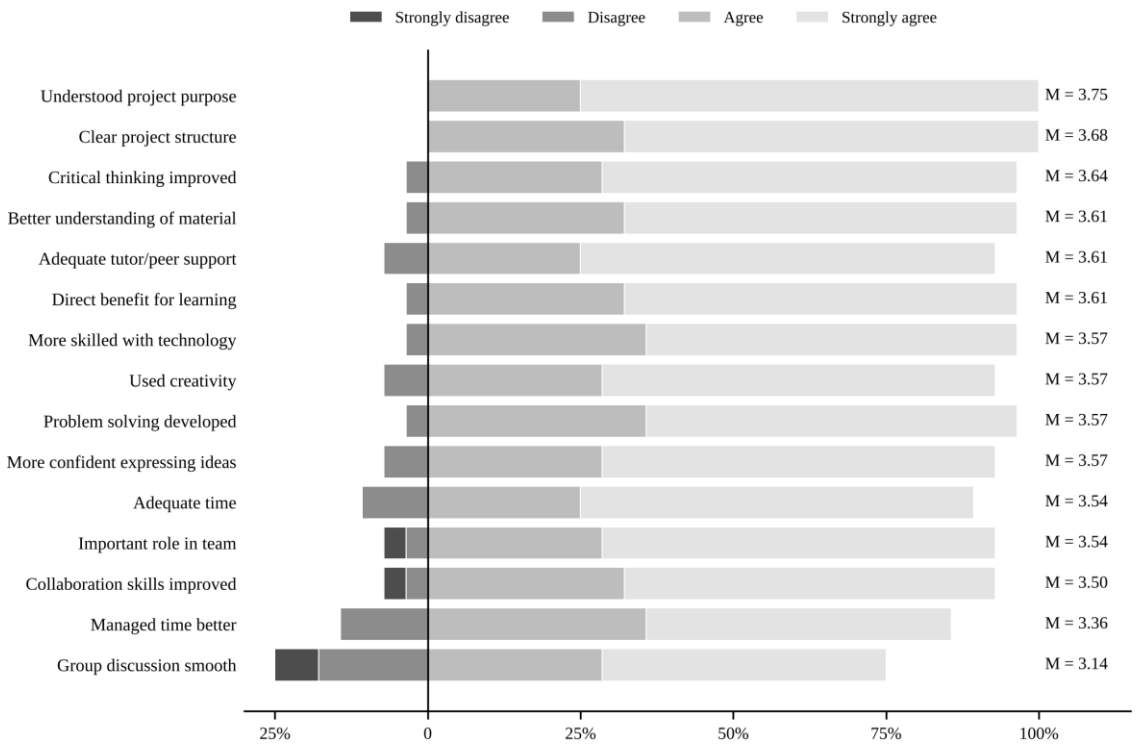


Figure 2. Distribution of responses to the 15 questionnaire items (N = 28), ordered by mean score

Two items stood out. All respondents agreed that they understood the purpose of the project and that its structure was clear. The weakest item was "group discussion ran smoothly and productively" (M = 3.14), with seven of 28 respondents disagreeing, followed by time management (M = 3.36). Respondents reported perceived improvements in critical thinking (96.4% agreement), problem solving (96.4%), and applied understanding of course material (96.4%).

The open-ended answers explain these ratings. Thirteen of 27 narratives named collaboration as the most valuable experience; one student learned "the importance of communication and uniting many heads into one" (Civic Education, R18). Fifteen described applying abstract values to concrete problems. A Pancasila respondent wrote that values "which I previously understood conceptually, I can now apply to a concrete problem, such as countering hoaxes" (R1). Ten described time pressure from work and family ("I am a mother of four and I also work," PAI, R16), and eleven described fragile coordination: teammates far apart, contact limited to WhatsApp, and inactive members. One team coordinator "worked alone and then asked members to evaluate" (PAI, R26). Nine asked for more frequent tutor feedback and more webinars.

Rq3: Integration Of Perspectives, Participation, And Constraints

Project themes. Titles were recorded for 26 of the 30 teams (Table 4). Religious tolerance was the largest category, followed by youth morality and national identity, and cyberbullying. Five of the seven tolerance projects came from one PAI class, and some were strongly contextual, such as a project on interreligious harmony in Bantaeng, which reflects the role of local wisdom in sustaining religious tolerance (Pajarianto et al., 2022). Ten teams (33.3%) had a documented public output, mostly short videos on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

Table 4. Thematic categories of project titles (n = 26)

Category	n	Example titles (translated)

Religious tolerance and diversity	7	“Tolerance: A bridge to unity in Bhinneka Tunggal Ika”
Youth morality and national identity	6	“Moral degradation of the nation's youth in the digital era”
Cyberbullying	4	“Social media ethics education to prevent bullying and strengthen social cohesion”
Hoaxes and hate speech	3	“Filter before sharing: Fighting hoaxes in the digital era”
Online and social risks	3	“A smart generation free from online gambling”
Civic participation and economic nationalism	2	“Smart and tolerant in the democratic process”
Unclassified	1	“Beauty Face” (short film)

Source: Project registry and tutors' class reports.

Integration of the three perspectives. The regionally grouped Pancasila class provided the most complete record: all five teams submitted project documents and all five published a video. Figure 3 summarises the coding of their documents.

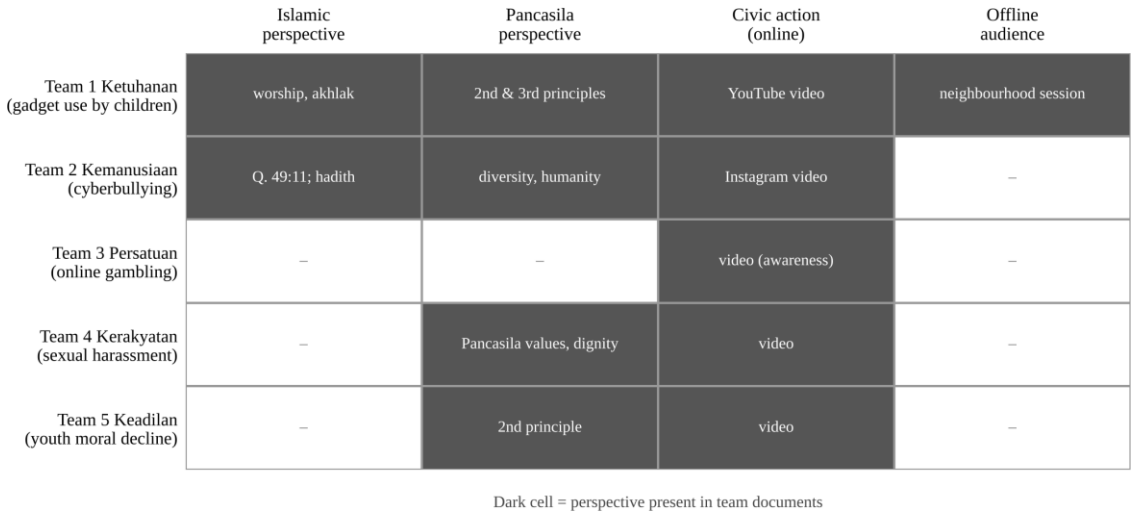


Figure 3. Presence of Islamic, Pancasila, and civic-action perspectives in the five team projects of the regionally grouped Pancasila class

Source: Team project documents (final reports for teams 1 and 2; project designs for teams 3–5).

All five teams designed a public action in the form of social media content, and four referred explicitly to Pancasila principles, but only two used an Islamic perspective to analyse their issue, even though every member was a PAI student. These two teams show what integration looked like in practice.

The Kemanusiaan (humanity) team addressed cyberbullying. Its final report analysed bullying from an Islamic perspective by quoting Q. al-Hujurat 49:11 on the prohibition of ridiculing others and a hadith from Sunan Ibn Majah, linked bullying to discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, race, and group, and described it as contrary to Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. The civic action was an awareness video on Instagram intended to raise awareness among the public, students, and teachers, especially adolescents. In the framework of Table 1, the team connected an Islamic ethical foundation (respect and the prohibition of ridicule), a national orientation (humanity and diversity), and a social action (a public campaign). The same report, however, listed far more ambitious outputs

than it delivered, including workshops in schools, a reporting application, and policy proposals, none of which were carried out.

The Ketuhanan (belief in God) team addressed children's excessive use of gadgets. Its report argued that uncontrolled gadget use draws children away from worship and good character (akhlak), and that it erodes empathy in ways that contradict the second and third principles of Pancasila. Besides a YouTube video, a team member held a socialisation session with adolescents and parents in the member's own neighbourhood on the positive and negative uses of gadgets, documented in the report. This was the only project in the class that reached an offline audience, and it comes closest to the "social service" that the theme intended.

The other three teams framed their issues in civic terms without an Islamic analysis, and two of them referred to Pancasila. The Persatuan (unity) team aimed to raise awareness of online gambling and "social media ethics"; the Kerakyatan (democracy) team aimed to prevent sexual harassment by "applying Pancasila values" and respecting human dignity; and the Keadilan (justice) team linked young people's moral decline on social media to the second principle of Pancasila.

Participation. In the documented class, all 25 students were active and 23–24 submitted each project task, but only 18 submitted the final report, and webinar attendance fell from 22 to 16–17 (Figure 4). Across the programme, the team estimated that about 70% of students were active in the tutorials and only about 30% contributed substantively to their team projects. Tutors' reports named the main constraints: teammates who did not know each other, unequal understanding of PjBL, low technology skills among some students, lack of laptops, scheduling clashes, and delays in asynchronous communication.

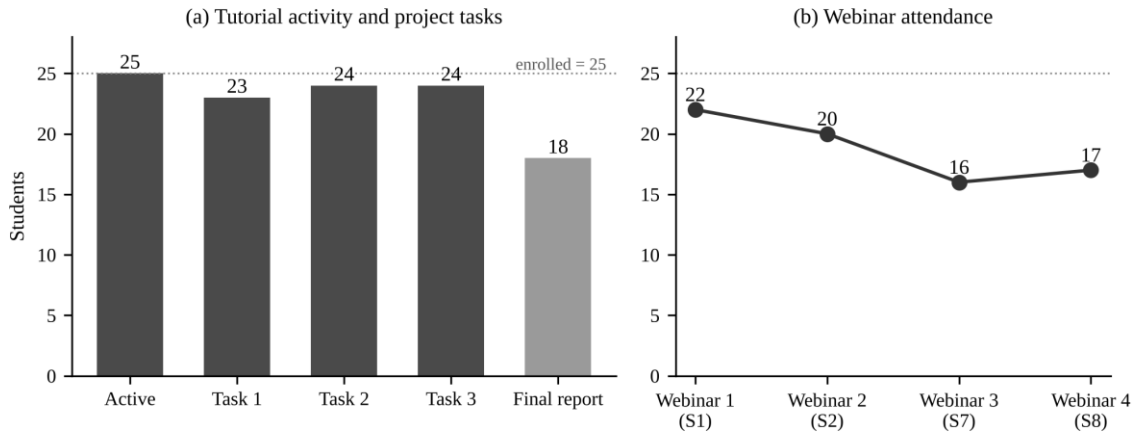


Figure 4. Task completion and webinar attendance in the regionally grouped Pancasila class (n = 25)

Source: Tutor's tutorial report.

Integration of findings. Table 5 brings the strands together.

Table 5. Joint display of findings

Domain	Quantitative evidence	Qualitative and document evidence	Interpretation
Clarity of design	Purpose and structure items:	Few complaints about structure	The staged design was understood

	100% agreement		
Value application	Applied understanding: 96.4% agreement (perceived)	Two of five teams used Islamic reasoning; four used Pancasila reasoning	Students applied civic and Pancasila values more readily than Islamic analysis
Collaboration	Discussion item lowest (*M* = 3.14)	Inactive members; coordinators working alone	Collaboration was valued but fragile
Social action	Ten of 30 teams with a documented public output	One team reached an offline audience	Action was mostly digital advocacy
Guidance	Tutor support: 92.9% agreement	Requests for more frequent feedback	Support was appreciated but too infrequent

DISCUSSION

Integrating Three Perspectives: What The Model Achieved

The model gave three compulsory courses a shared problem and a shared project cycle, and the strongest projects show that students could combine an Islamic ethical analysis, Pancasila values, and a civic action in one piece of work. The Kemanusiaan team's use of Q. al-Hujurat 49:11 to explain why cyberbullying is wrong, followed by a public campaign addressed to the adolescents most affected, is the kind of integration that Table 1 anticipated. It illustrates the relational civility described by Dishon and Ben-Porath (2018): students reached an audience with a shared goal rather than simply avoiding offensive speech. It also corresponds to both dimensions of digital citizenship identified by Jones and Mitchell (2016), respectful behaviour and online civic engagement.

Integration was uneven, however. Even in a class composed entirely of PAI students, three of five teams analysed their issue without Islamic reasoning, and the rubrics gave them no reason to do otherwise. Pancasila and civic reasoning appeared more readily, probably because the course in question was Pancasila and because its vocabulary maps easily onto social problems. This finding is consistent with the observation that project products in Islamic Religious Education are often strong in application but limited in depth of analysis (Herlina et al., 2025). It also suggests that integration does not happen simply because three courses share a theme. It has to be required by the task and assessed. A rubric criterion asking teams to show the Islamic, Pancasila, and civic basis of their content would make the three layers of the framework visible in every project. Where projects do disseminate Islamic values, as in the two teams above, they can be described as a form of religious outreach through social media; for the other projects, which addressed civic problems without religious content, the term “digital da'wah” would not be appropriate.

Digital advocacy and the place of service-learning

The second part of the theme, berbakti sosial (devotion to social service), was realised mostly as digital advocacy. Only one team took its message to an offline audience. In service-learning terms, advocacy content without an identified partner sits at the beginning of a continuum: it addresses a public, but it lacks the structured reciprocity with a community partner and the reflection on that partnership that define service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). A recent review of service-

learning in higher education identifies partnerships with communities and locally focused projects with visible impact as the main ways to overcome implementation barriers (Álvarez-Vanegas et al., 2024).

The model can therefore be developed into a partner-based version. Each team would identify a specific partner before planning, such as a school, a mosque youth group (remaja masjid), or a village community; define the problem with that partner; and produce content that the partner uses, for example in a school's anti-bullying programme or a mosque youth group's digital literacy session. Impact could then be judged by partner-relevant indicators, such as the number of participants reached in a session, the partner's use of the content, or short pre- and post-session questions to the audience. The Ketuhanan team's neighbourhood session shows that this is feasible for distance learners, who already live within communities and can serve them locally.

Unequal contribution as a design problem

The most consistent weakness was collaboration. Respondents valued it highly but rated group discussion lowest, coordinators often worked alone, and the programme estimated that only about 30% of students contributed substantively to projects. It would be easy to blame individual students. The evidence suggests instead that unequal contribution in ODL is largely a product of design meeting the characteristics of adult learners. Adult distance learners face external constraints from work and family (Kara et al., 2019), and non-contribution in group projects often reflects competing demands and different expectations rather than laziness (Hall & Buzwell, 2013). Online group projects repeatedly suffer from uneven participation, unclear guidance, and weak relationships (Donelan & Kear, 2024), and designers tend to assume that putting learners in groups with communication tools will produce interaction (Kreijns et al., 2003).

Four design responses follow. First, flexible collaboration: teams should be able to contribute asynchronously through shared documents and recorded updates, rather than depending on meetings that working students cannot attend. Second, individual task allocation: each member should own a named component of the product (script, verification of sources, design, editing, publication) with an individual deliverable. Third, contribution monitoring: a contribution log in the progress report and a short peer assessment at the end would make individual effort visible and allow fair grading. Fourth, structured communication spaces: a team charter in the first week and fixed weekly check-ins in the LMS would replace ad hoc WhatsApp coordination. These responses also build the sense of community that sustains distance learners (Kreijns et al., 2013; Rovai, 2002). The regionally grouped Pancasila class, in which members shared a regional office and a study programme and in which every team published its work, suggests that proximity may be a further design lever, although composition was confounded with tutor and course in this pilot.

Guidance and feedback

Students appreciated their tutors' support but asked for it more often. Many lacked prior experience of projects or of video production, and minimally guided inquiry is known to work poorly for such learners (Kirschner et al., 2006). With four webinars and asynchronous forums as the main channels of teaching presence (Garrison et al., 1999), feedback tended to arrive too late to shape the work. Feedback is most useful when it addresses the task and the process while learners can still act on it (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Weekly progress check-ins, worked examples of strong projects, short technical clinics, and peer mentors from earlier cohorts are practical responses.

Design principles

The findings lead to five design principles for project-based Islamic and civic education in distance higher education:

1. *Integrate by design.* Frame each project around a civic-religious problem and require, in the task and the rubric, an Islamic ethical basis, a Pancasila orientation, and a civic action.
2. *Partner-based service.* Identify a concrete beneficiary or partner before planning, and assess the effect on that partner.
3. *Flexible, accountable collaboration.* Combine asynchronous contribution paths, individual task ownership, contribution logs, and peer assessment.
4. *Engineered sociability.* Form small teams with attention to proximity and availability, and invest in team-building in the first week.
5. *Frequent guidance.* Provide weekly check-ins, exemplars, and peer mentoring, especially during implementation.

These principles are consistent with the programme team's policy recommendations, which proposed embedding project activities in UT's interactive teaching materials, offering a fully project-based option to self-selecting students and in face-to-face tutorials, training tutors regularly, and testing alternative weightings of project work and final examinations.

CONCLUSION

This study makes three contributions. First, it offers a model of pedagogical integration in which Islamic values provide the ethical foundation, Pancasila the national orientation, and civic education the framework for social action, all directed at five dispositions of digital civility and enacted through a shared project cycle. Second, it provides empirical evidence of both the potential and the limits of such projects in distance higher education. Respondents found the design clear and reported perceived gains in applied understanding and critical thinking, and the strongest projects combined Qur'anic reasoning, Pancasila values, and public action. Integration was uneven, however: most teams did not use Islamic analysis, only a third of teams documented a public output, social service was mostly reduced to online advocacy, and collaboration was fragile among working, dispersed students. Third, it proposes five design principles that address these limits: integration by design, partner-based service, flexible and accountable collaboration, engineered sociability, and frequent guidance.

These conclusions must be read in light of the study's limitations. The questionnaire results reflect the positive reception of 28 of 137 students, who were probably the more engaged participants; they are self-reports from an instrument developed by the programme team and are subject to common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). They do not provide objective evidence that students' digital civility improved. The coding of project documents covered one class, and for three of its teams only the project designs were available. Participation records were complete for one class, the estimate of project contribution came from the programme's evaluation rather than activity logs, the open-ended responses were coded without an inter-coder agreement procedure, and the expert review of the guideline was qualitative rather than a quantitative validation of the model. Future research should test the revised, partner-based model with performance-based measures of digital civility, rubric scores, LMS activity logs, partner-level impact indicators, and comparisons between team compositions and levels of tutor guidance.

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