

Strengthening the Value of Gotong Royong: Perspectives of Students and Civics Teachers at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna

Muci Herliyanto, Nurdian Setiawan, Vinni Helvionita

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Natuna

muciherliyanto@gmail.com, nurdiansetiawan333@gmail.com, helvionitav@gmail.com

Received: 03 Jul 2026
Revised: 06 Agu 2026
Accepted: 16 Agu 2026

Abstract

This study aims to examine the strengthening of the value of gotong royong (mutual cooperation) in Civic Education (Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan [PPKn]) at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna from the perspectives of students and teachers. The study is motivated by a discrepancy between the ideal conditions identified in previous studies, which indicate that the cultivation of gotong royong values generally encounters structural barriers and erosion resulting from globalization, and the empirical conditions at the research site, which demonstrate comparatively optimal outcomes. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving teachers and students as research participants. The findings indicate that teachers perceive gotong royong as a strategic instrument for character development and the transmission of local cultural values, whereas students understand it primarily through their everyday practical experiences as a means of fostering togetherness and social interaction. The successful strengthening of this value is influenced by several challenges, including digitalization, the formalization of school activities, and the geographical conditions of an archipelagic region. Nevertheless, these challenges can be addressed through contextualized and sustainable learning strategies. This study contributes to the development of character education models that are responsive to the social, cultural, and geographical contexts of archipelagic regions while also supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the field of education.

Keywords: gotong royong; Civic Education; character education; Pancasila Student Profile; character development

(*) Corresponding Author: muciherliyanto@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Based on observations at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna, the strengthening of the value of gotong royong is manifested through various routine activities that directly involve students, such as classroom duty, Friday Clean-Up activities (Jumat Bersih) to maintain the school environment, and group assignments. For students, these activities are perceived as enjoyable opportunities for togetherness and as a means of strengthening friendships beyond the formal classroom learning environment. PPKn (Civic Education) teachers, on the other hand, view gotong royong not merely as a physical activity, but also as a contextual learning medium through which students can directly practice the values of Pancasila. At the same time, it serves as an effort to preserve the traditions of togetherness characteristic of the Natuna island community so that they are not eroded by the shift toward individualistic values.

The interaction between teachers and students in strengthening this value is reflected in the implementation of various strategies, including the integration of gotong royong into the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar

Pancasila) with a theme centered on Natuna local wisdom, collaborative project-based learning models that require teamwork, sustainable social action programs such as caring-for-others activities, and recognition for student groups demonstrating the highest levels of cooperation and social concern. Teachers assess the success of strengthening this value through concrete indicators, including a decrease in student conflicts, increased social awareness, and stronger solidarity in various school activities.

Overall, these efforts have produced optimal outcomes at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna. Students no longer perceive gotong royong merely as an obligation, but have increasingly incorporated it into their everyday social practices. Meanwhile, teachers consistently maintain the continuity of this value through various integrated programs and learning strategies. This condition indicates that the school's strategy for strengthening gotong royong has been effectively implemented and has achieved optimal outcomes.

Ideally, the cultivation of gotong royong values through PPKn learning at the secondary school level continues to face various structural and cultural challenges that make optimal outcomes difficult to achieve. Arifin and Nurlaili (2022) found that symptoms of intolerance and a lack of social concern continue to occur in school environments, indicating that the internalization of social values through character education has not yet been fully embedded among students. Similarly, Rifaldi, Hidayatissalam, and Turnip (2025) emphasized that the value of gotong royong tends to decline in the era of globalization due to individualism and the influence of digital technology, which reduce the intensity of direct social interaction among students. Sulastri and Handayani (2023) further noted that the effectiveness of value cultivation depends heavily on the consistency of teacher role modeling, whereas in practice, discrepancies between what teachers teach and what they demonstrate remain common. Fatimatuazzahrah (2024) also reported that the implementation of curriculum-based character-strengthening programs is frequently constrained by limited funding, inadequate teacher training, and weak institutional support. Furthermore, Nawa, Musa, and Kota (2025) emphasized that the success of PPKn in fostering gotong royong attitudes is strongly influenced by teaching methods, active teacher involvement, and a supportive school environment, conditions that are not always consistently achieved in practice.

The discussion above illustrates a gap between the ideal condition (*das sollen*) and the actual condition (*das sein*) concerning the strengthening of gotong royong values through PPKn learning. Theoretically, various studies indicate that the cultivation of gotong royong values in schools generally faces structural barriers, erosion resulting from globalization, and dependence on consistent teacher role modeling and adequate institutional support, making optimal achievement difficult to attain uniformly. However, preliminary findings at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna reveal a different pattern, in which the cultivation of gotong royong appears to be highly effective, as indicated by active student participation and the consistent role of teachers as facilitators.

This discrepancy raises an important research problem that warrants further investigation: why and how can the strengthening of gotong royong values at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna be implemented optimally when, theoretically, such ideal conditions are generally difficult to achieve in many other schools? This gap leads to the following research questions: How do students and PPKn teachers at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna perceive the process of strengthening gotong royong values that has been implemented, and what factors support its successful implementation?

Research on strengthening gotong royong values in education has been conducted from various perspectives and across different educational levels. Several studies have focused on effective learning strategies for cultivating these values, including cooperative learning, group projects, and project-based approaches (Lestari, 2020; Nurhidayati & Junaidi, 2022; Anjani & Mulyadi, 2023; Sari & Fathurrohman, 2023). Other studies have

highlighted the role of teachers as role models and facilitators in developing a collaborative classroom culture (Wulandari & Fadillah, 2022; Widiyastuti & Hasanah, 2023; Maulana & Yusra, 2023; Sulastri & Handayani, 2023). In addition, several studies have examined gotong royong in relation to the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile within the Merdeka Curriculum, at both primary and secondary school levels (Prasetyo, 2022; Mooduto & Otaya, 2023; Dewi, Ardhyantama, & Khalawi, 2024; Damayanti, Imaduddin, & Sari, 2025). Other studies have explored gotong royong within the broader context of society as a manifestation of Pancasila values (Dewanti, Alhudawi, & Hodriani, 2023; Danurwindo, Rahayu, & Ciptandriyo, 2024; Illahi & Sari, 2024; Agnesya, Hasanudin, & Saputri, 2025).

Although these studies provide important contributions to understanding strategies and supporting factors in cultivating gotong royong values, most remain focused on primary education, broader community contexts, or schools located in urban areas and Java (Hanafiah, Martati, & Mirnawati, 2023; Nawa, Musa, & Kota, 2025). Studies specifically examining a dual perspective—that is, how students and PPKn teachers collectively interpret and experience the process of strengthening gotong royong values—at the junior secondary school level, particularly in an outermost archipelagic region such as Natuna, remain very limited. This gap provides the basis for the present study. Accordingly, the investigation of gotong royong at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna is not merely a replication of previous research but rather contributes to enriching the body of PPKn scholarship by introducing a distinct geographical and socio-cultural context.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a dual perspective, incorporating the views of both students and PPKn teachers simultaneously in examining the process of strengthening gotong royong values at the junior secondary school level. This approach is relatively uncommon in previous studies, which have generally focused on only one of these groups. Furthermore, the research setting, SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna, is located in one of Indonesia's outermost archipelagic regions, providing a socio-cultural and geographical context that differs from that of most related studies concentrated in Java or major urban areas. This novelty is significant because it also contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes equitable access to quality education, including in remote and disadvantaged regions, and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which positions gotong royong as a foundation for social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

This study is important because gotong royong represents one of the social identities of the Indonesian nation, the continuity of which increasingly faces challenges from globalization and individualism, particularly among younger generations. Understanding how this value can be optimally cultivated at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna from the simultaneous perspectives of students and teachers can provide a learning model that may be beneficial for other schools, particularly those operating in geographically and socially similar contexts. This urgency is consistent with the spirit of achieving the SDGs, in which contextual and inclusive character education contributes directly to the development of high-quality and equitable human resources capable of maintaining social harmony amid diversity, as mandated by both global and national development agendas.

Based on the gap between the ideal and actual conditions described above, this study was designed to examine how the strengthening of gotong royong values is implemented through PPKn learning at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna from the perspectives of students and teachers, including the forms of activities, patterns of interaction, and meanings constructed by both parties regarding the process. In addition, the study seeks to examine the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the successful strengthening of gotong royong values,

thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the conditions that enable optimal outcomes to be achieved at the school.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine in depth how the value of gotong royong is strengthened through Civic Education (PPKn) learning at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna from the perspectives of students and teachers. The case study design was selected because the study focuses on a single case within its real-life and contextual setting, thereby enabling the researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and social interactions of the participants comprehensively and in depth. The research participants consisted of PPKn teachers and students at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna, selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in and adequate understanding of activities aimed at strengthening the value of gotong royong.

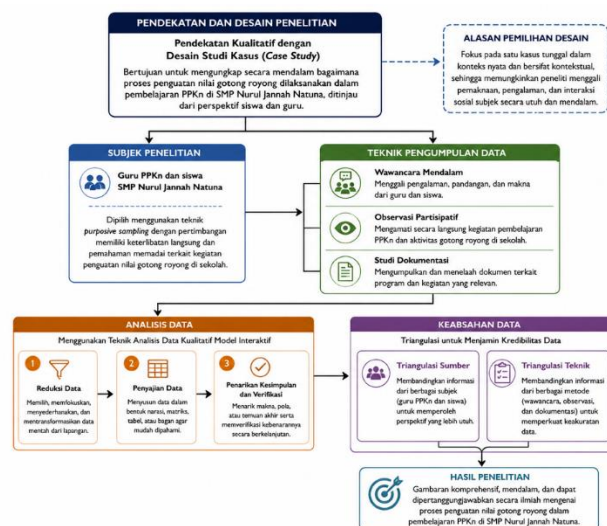


Figure 1. Research Methodological Framework

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation of learning activities and gotong royong practices at the school, and documentation of relevant programs and activities. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using an interactive qualitative data analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data trustworthiness, the study employed source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from different participants (teachers and students) and through different data collection methods (interviews, observations, and documentation). This process was intended to provide a comprehensive account of the phenomenon and strengthen the scientific credibility of the findings.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that students and teachers have complementary perspectives in understanding the process of strengthening the value of *gotong royong*, although their points of departure differ. PPKn teachers perceive *gotong royong* not merely as a physical

activity but as a strategic instrument for character development in accordance with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. It is also regarded as a contextual learning medium through which students can directly practice the values embodied in the third and fifth principles of Pancasila. For teachers, *gotong royong* also represents a cultural heritage of the Natuna archipelagic community, exemplified by the tradition of communal work in villages, which needs to be preserved amid the shift toward individualistic values resulting from modernization.

The strengthening process is implemented through various concrete strategies, including integrating the value of *gotong royong* into the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila) with a theme centered on Natuna local wisdom; implementing project-based collaborative learning that requires teamwork in addressing social issues surrounding the school; conducting sustainable social action programs, such as activities promoting care for others; and providing recognition to student groups demonstrating the highest levels of cooperation and social concern.

In contrast, students tend to understand *gotong royong* through their everyday practical experiences, such as classroom duty, Friday Clean-Up activities, and group assignments. For them, these activities are primarily experienced as opportunities for togetherness and enjoyable interactions with peers outside the formal classroom environment rather than as deeply philosophical values.

This difference in perspective indicates that value internalization occurs at two distinct levels. Teachers operate at a conceptual and strategic level, whereas students engage with the value through concrete everyday experiences. Rather than being contradictory, these two levels mutually reinforce one another in the actual learning process.

The study identified several challenges that influence the effectiveness of the internalization process. One of the main challenges is digitalization. Students' dependence on digital devices may encourage individualistic behavior and reduce their sensitivity to the social environment around them. Another challenge concerns the formalization of activities, whereby some *gotong royong* activities are still perceived as school obligations or regulations rather than as practices arising from students' genuine awareness. This condition creates a risk that *gotong royong* may be reduced to a routine activity without meaningful value internalization.

Geographical conditions in the archipelagic region also constitute a particular constraint. The considerable distance between students' residences makes it difficult to coordinate *gotong royong* activities outside the school environment. In addition, some students still demonstrate a limited understanding of *gotong royong*, interpreting it primarily as physical cooperation rather than fully recognizing its philosophical meaning as part of a broader social support system.

These findings can be discussed from the perspective of diffusion of innovations theory, which explains that the adoption of a new value or practice within a community occurs gradually and is not uniform across individuals. Some students have internalized the value of *gotong royong* comprehensively, whereas others remain at a more superficial level of understanding.

The challenges associated with formalization and digitalization are also relevant to the broader shift from collective toward individualistic values resulting from modernization. This suggests that strengthening *gotong royong* in the digital era requires more creative and contextual approaches so that the value does not become merely an administrative obligation but is genuinely internalized as students' social awareness.

Therefore, the successful strengthening of *gotong royong* at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna results from the synergy between teacher-designed learning strategies, students'

sociocultural readiness, and sustained efforts to address the structural and geographical challenges inherent in an archipelagic context.

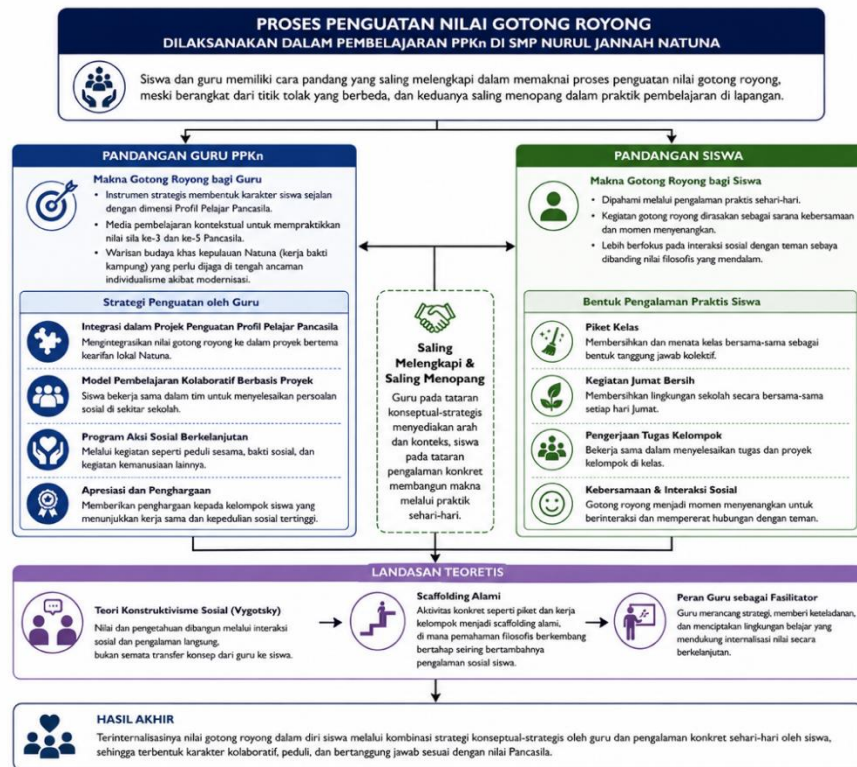


Figure 2. The Process of Strengthening the Value of Gotong Royong



Figure 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the strengthening of the value of gotong royong through PPKn learning at SMP Nurul Jannah Natuna occurs through the interaction of two complementary perspectives: those of teachers and students. Teachers perceive gotong royong as a strategic instrument for character development and the preservation of local cultural values, which is implemented through various contextual learning strategies, including its integration into the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, project-based collaborative learning, and sustainable social action programs. Students, meanwhile, primarily understand gotong royong through their everyday practical experiences as a means of fostering togetherness, although some have not yet fully comprehended its deeper philosophical significance. This difference in levels of understanding nevertheless becomes a mutually reinforcing strength in translating the value into concrete practices within the school environment.

The successful strengthening of gotong royong is accompanied by several challenges, including the influence of digitalization, the formalization of activities that do not always arise from students' genuine awareness, and the geographical constraints of the archipelagic region, which make it difficult to coordinate activities outside the school. Nevertheless, through contextual and consistently implemented learning strategies, the school has been able to minimize these obstacles, allowing the value of gotong royong to be effectively internalized. These findings confirm that the success of character education, particularly in cultivating gotong royong, depends heavily on the synergy between teachers' active roles, students' direct experiences, and sensitivity to the sociocultural and geographical contexts in which education takes place.

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