

University Student Responses to the Implementation of the Active Debate Method in the Pancasila Course

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Abstract

This study aims to determine student responses to the implementation of the active debate method in the Pancasila course. This research is quantitative and descriptive in nature. The subjects of this study were 131 students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University. The instrument used was an online questionnaire employing a Likert scale (1-5). The research procedure involved asking students who had participated in the active debate method during the Pancasila course to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire results were analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis to ascertain student responses to the use of the debate method. The findings indicate that student responses to the active debate method in the Pancasila course fall under the "Good" category. Student responses for each aspect are as follows: (1) Student activity and participation (Good category); (2) Understanding and analysis of ideological concepts (Good category); (3) Critical thinking and argumentation skills (Good category); (4) Communication and social attitudes (Very Good category); and (5) Effectiveness and general impression of the learning (Good category). It can be concluded that the active debate method is a viable option for lecturers teaching the Pancasila course, helping students gain a deeper understanding of the basic concepts of Pancasila ideology and encouraging active student participation in lectures.

1. Introduction

In accordance with Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, Article 35 (UU Republika Indonesia No. 12 Tahun 2012 pasal 35) stipulates that every higher education institution is obligated to offer courses in Religion, Pancasila, Civics, and the Indonesian Language. The state mandates that Pancasila education be implemented and must be included in the higher education curriculum as a standalone, compulsory course. This provision ensures that the Pancasila course can focus more effectively on fostering students' understanding and appreciation of the Indonesian national ideology. The intent is for Pancasila education to serve as a core spirit in shaping students' character and identity, while simultaneously developing their professional ethos within their respective fields of study (Kemristekdikti, 2016). Consequently, the Pancasila course is a mandatory requirement for all study programs, both at the undergraduate (Sarjana) and diploma (Diploma) levels.

The inclusion of Pancasila education is essential for study programs within higher education institutions. Consequently, it is both logical and imperative that Pancasila be disseminated widely, one key avenue being the Pancasila course in universities (Kemristekdikti, 2016). Pancasila education in higher education plays a critical role in shaping student character by instilling robust ethical and moral principles. Students are expected to develop strong, responsible, and integrity-driven character through a deep understanding and application of Pancasila's values (Furnamasari et al., 2024). As the state ideology, Pancasila offers profound values that can serve as a guiding principle for life (Kartikasari et al., 2025). Thus, the Pancasila course plays a vital role in shaping student character and cultivating their national awareness.

One of the core topics in the Pancasila course is its position as the state ideology. The Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Kemristekdikti, 2016) outlines that this subject examines the conceptual understanding and historical development of the ideology of Pancasila in relation

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to global ideologies, as well as the relationship between Pancasila and religion. This discussion is paramount because an ideology constitutes a system of beliefs that citizens uphold in their societal, national, and political lives. Students need to acquire a sound understanding of why Pancasila is the appropriate ideology for the Indonesian nation. Furthermore, students are required to compare and contrast the Pancasila ideology with other major world ideologies, such as Marxism-Leninism, Liberalism, Capitalism, and Socialism. Consequently, an appropriate instructional method is necessary to ensure that the Pancasila course fosters active student participation and deepens their comprehension of the Pancasila ideology.

A study conducted by Ilkodar, Budiman, and Hastangka (2020) concluded that the instructional methods used for Pancasila Education in higher education institutions in the Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (DIY) region were partially ineffective (25%-33%), indicating a misalignment between the methods employed and the learning objectives. These findings highlight a fundamental issue concerning the pedagogical approaches utilized by lecturers. Further supporting this, research by Sutoyo and Wartoyo (2019) revealed that lecturers predominantly employ the lecture method when teaching material related to Pancasila. The persistent use of this method without incorporating other instructional variations leads to student disengagement and boredom. Therefore, there is an apparent necessity for pedagogical innovation through the adoption of alternative teaching methods in the Pancasila course.

One pedagogical method applicable to the Pancasila course is the active debate method. Through debate, students learn to evaluate arguments in greater depth, identify the strengths and weaknesses of positions, and develop more structured and logical communication skills. Furthermore, debate enhances students' confidence in articulating their opinions rationally and in an evidence-based manner (Walenta et al., 2024). The implementation of the active debate method in teaching foundational civic education concepts fosters greater student enthusiasm for expressing opinions, as the division into pro and con groups stimulates more active participation in discussions (Nurdin, 2016). The debate method provides students with the latitude to express their ideas, thoughts, and perspectives on national issues. It also trains students to embody democratic values, reflected in behavior that demonstrates respect, tolerance, and a readiness to disagree on various matters (Ernaliana, 2022). Debate encourages the development of critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills (Wordlaw et al., 2021). Therefore, employing the active debate method in the Pancasila course can be a strategic choice to encourage students to play a more active role in the learning process.

As previously outlined, the active debate method offers several advantages; however, it also presents challenges, such as being more time-intensive. This study aims to investigate student responses to the implementation of the debate method in the Pancasila course. A questionnaire survey technique was employed to gather feedback from students. This research is significant due to the scarcity of studies specifically examining student responses to the use of the debate method within the context of the Pancasila curriculum. It is anticipated that this study will provide a clear depiction of student perceptions regarding the active debate method.

2. Method

This study employs a quantitative descriptive research design. The quantitative method is employed when a researcher aims to measure a variable or a set of variables, utilizing descriptive statistics to help answer the research questions (Adu & Miles, 2024). The subjects of this study were 131 students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University. The students involved were those enrolled in the Pancasila course who participated in learning sessions utilizing the active debate method. The instrument used was an online questionnaire employing a Likert scale (1-5). The research procedure involved asking students who had experienced the active debate method in the Pancasila course to complete the online questionnaire. The aspects of student response measured were: (1) Student activity and participation; (2) Understanding and analysis of ideological concepts; (3) Critical thinking and argumentation skills; (4) Communication and social attitudes; and (5) Effectiveness and general impression of the learning. The questionnaire results were analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis to ascertain student responses to the use of the debate method in the Pancasila course. The mean scores of student responses were categorized based on the criteria established by Widoyoko (2009), as presented in Table 1. The maximum ideal score for each questionnaire item was 5, and the minimum ideal score was 1.

Table 1. Reference for Converting the Mean Score of Each Questionnaire Statement into Categories

No.	Formula (Widoyoko, 2009)	Average Score	Category
1.	$X > \bar{X}_i + 1.8 \times sb_i$	>4.2	Very Good
2.	$\bar{X}_i + 0.6 \times sb_i < X \leq \bar{X}_i + 1.8 \times sb_i$	>3.4– 4.2	Good
3.	$\bar{X}_i - 0.6 \times sb_i < X \leq \bar{X}_i + 0.6 \times sb_i$	>2.6– 3.4	Fair
4.	$\bar{X}_i - 1.8 \times sb_i < X \leq \bar{X}_i - 0.6 \times sb_i$	>1.8– 2.6	Poor
5.	$X \leq \bar{X}_i - 1.8 \times sb_i$	≤ 1.8	Very Poor

Description:

\bar{X}_i (Ideal mean) = $\frac{1}{2}$ (ideal maximum score + ideal minimum score)

sb_i (Ideal standard doneviation) = $\frac{1}{6}$ (ideal maximum score - ideal minimum score)

X = Empirical score

3. Result and Discussion

The findings of this study present student responses to the implementation of the debate method in the Pancasila course. Data on student responses were collected via an online questionnaire. The data detailing student responses to the active debate method for each statement are presented in Table 2. Furthermore, the data on student responses for each measured aspect are summarized in Figure 1.

Table 2. Student Responses to the Active Debate Method

Aspects	Questionnaire statement	Average	Category
Students Activity and Participation	1.The active debate method made me more active in participating in the Pancasila course.	4.11	Good
	2.The time allocated in the active debate was sufficient for all participants to contribute.	3.88	Good
Understanding and analysis of the ideology concept	1.The active debate helped me understand the basic concepts of Pancasila ideology more deeply.	4.22	Very Good
	2.I can explain the differences between Pancasila ideology and Marxism-Leninism and Socialism.	3.96	Good
	3.The active debate helped me understand the differences between Pancasila ideology and Liberalism and Capitalism.	4.18	Good
	4. The active debate helped me recognize the strengths of Pancasila ideology compared to other ideologies.	4.10	Good
Critical thinking and argumentation skills	1.The active debate activity encouraged me to think critically about various global ideological systems.	4.15	Good
	2. Through the active debate, I learned to construct arguments based on facts and valid references.	4.18	Good
Communication and social attitudes	1. I became more confident in expressing my opinions in public.	3.94	Good
	2.I learned to respect differing viewpoints during the debate sessions.	4.45	Very Good
	3. The active debate improved my ability to communicate logically and politely.	4.20	Good
	4. The lecturer provided clear guidance and direction throughout the active debate.	4.53	Very Good
Effectiveness and general impression of learning	1. The active debate method made the learning atmosphere more engaging compared to the lecture method.	4.18	Good
	2. The active debate increased my motivation to study the values of Pancasila.	4.17	Good

Aspects	Questionnaire statement	Average	Category
	3. Overall, I am satisfied with the implementation of the active debate method for this subject.	4.09	Good

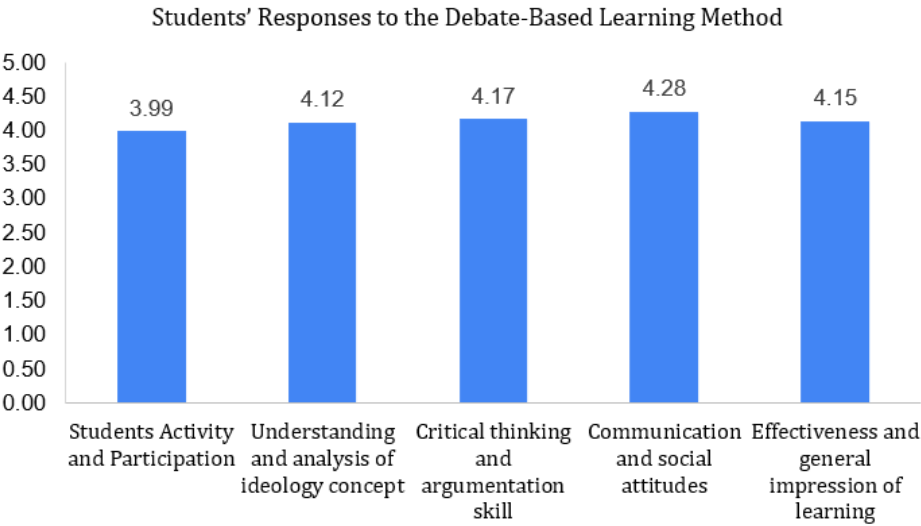


Figure 1. Student Responses to the Active Debate-Based Learning Method

The findings of this study indicate that student responses to the active debate method are as follows: (1) Student Activity and Participation (Good category); (2) Understanding and Analysis of Ideological Concepts (Good category); (3) Critical Thinking and Argumentation Skills (Good category); (4) Communication and Social Attitudes (Very Good category); and (5) Effectiveness and General Impression of the Learning (Good category). The most positive student response was directed towards the aspect of Communication and Social Attitudes, which received a "Very Good" categorization. This signifies that students perceive the implementation of the active debate method in the classroom as an effective means to train and enhance their communication skills and social conduct. Among the measured aspects, the first, Student Activity and Participation, received the lowest mean score of 3.99 (in the Good category), while the fourth, Communication and Social Attitudes, received the highest mean score of 4.28 (in the Very Good category). The primary reason for the lower score in the Activity and Participation aspect, as indicated by students, was the perceived insufficiency of time allocated for the active debate sessions. It is important to note that despite yielding the lowest mean score, the Student Activity and Participation aspect still falls within the "Good" category.

The active debate method in this study was implemented by dividing students into five groups, each representing a distinct ideology: (1) Pancasila Ideology, (2) Marxism-Leninism Ideology, (3) Liberalism Ideology, (4) Socialism Ideology, and (5) Capitalism Ideology. Each group was allocated five minutes to present their assigned ideology, followed by a debate session. The duration of the debate was approximately 40 minutes for first-semester students and 60 minutes for fifth-semester students. Based on student feedback, it is recommended that lecturers intending to implement this debate method should consider increasing the allocated time and ensure that every student is afforded an equal opportunity to participate.

The results of this study demonstrate that the active debate method significantly enhanced student engagement in the Pancasila course (Good category). Furthermore, the debate activities effectively encouraged students to think critically about various global ideological systems (Good category). These findings are consistent with prior research conducted in other academic disciplines. For instance, a study by Agetania *et al.* (2025) found that the debate method significantly contributed to student activity and critical thinking in a leadership course, fostering improvements in student autonomy, as well as skills in explanation, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and concluding. Similarly, Nurdin observed that the application of the active debate method in basic Civic Education concepts generated greater student enthusiasm for expressing opinions, as the division into pro and con groups stimulated more active

discussion. Debate has been consistently proven to develop critical thinking skills, enhance communication, and promote teamwork across various academic disciplines (Rodger & Stewart-Lord, 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that the active debate method is an effective pedagogical strategy for fostering active student engagement and promoting critical thinking in academic settings.

This study also indicates that students felt a greater understanding of both Pancasila ideology and other global ideologies after participating in the active debate method. The measured aspect of "Understanding and Analysis of Ideological Concepts" achieved a mean score of 4.12 (Good category). This finding aligns with the academic literature. According to Rahmelia (2022), students gain knowledge about the major ideologies adhered to by countries worldwide through the Pancasila course. This understanding is acquired specifically when studying the differences between Pancasila ideology and other major global ideologies. The active debate method directly facilitates this process. To engage effectively in the debate, students are compelled to comprehend all the ideologies being discussed, which in turn drives them to achieve a substantive understanding of each one.

Student responses in this study indicate that the active debate method facilitated their learning in constructing arguments based on facts and valid references. Debate serves as a medium for presenting ideas and arguments, as well as a method of communication between a sender and a receiver (Aarar & Valverde, 2025). Group debate activities create an environment that benefits participants by actively exposing them to ideas and arguments they may not have previously encountered, while also providing a platform to discuss them (Obaid, 2022). Through debate, students learn to evaluate arguments more critically, identify the strengths and weaknesses in different positions, and develop more structured and logical communication skills. Furthermore, debate enhances students' confidence in articulating their opinions in a rational and evidence-based manner (Walenta et al., 2024). The use of the active debate method in the Pancasila course provided a structured opportunity for students to debate Pancasila as the state ideology and systematically compare it with other ideologies.

The results of this study demonstrate that the active debate method significantly improved students' ability to communicate logically and respectfully (Good category). A particularly notable finding was that students learned to appreciate differing viewpoints during the debate sessions (Very Good category). Furthermore, participation in the debates increased students' confidence in expressing their opinions in a public forum (Good category). These findings are strongly supported by existing research. The work of Djirly and Murdiono (2024) confirms that the application of the debate method significantly enhances students' communication skills, particularly in articulating opinions logically and coherently, listening and responding to opposing arguments judiciously, and participating actively in the learning process. Their research notes that students grow more confident in presenting their viewpoints and sharpen their critical thinking skills through meaningful discursive engagement. Corroborating this, Obaid (2022) found that debate teams instill high levels of confidence in students, empowering them to base their arguments on relevant scientific information gathered from existing literature. Consequently, as Djirly and Murdiono (2024) conclude, the debate method can be considered an effective alternative instructional strategy for honing communication abilities and fostering a more profound comprehension of subject matter.

Student responses indicate that the active debate method created a more engaging learning atmosphere compared to the traditional lecture method (Good category). The persistent use of lectures without variation can lead to student disengagement and diminished interest in the subject matter. Therefore, integrating the active debate method serves as a viable pedagogical innovation for the Pancasila course. The efficacy of this approach can be understood through the lens of social constructivist theory. Social constructivism helps explain why debate can be highly effective in teaching content that might otherwise be perceived as dense or uninteresting (Howe & Soderberg, 2025). A key tenet of Vygotsky's theory emphasizes that social interaction is crucial, as knowledge is co-constructed between two or more individuals (Schunk, 2012). The active debate format directly facilitates this peer-to-peer interaction, thereby enabling the collaborative construction of knowledge. Empirically, students reported that the active debate method increased their motivation to study the values of Pancasila (in the Good category). Overall, students expressed satisfaction with the implementation of the active debate method for the topic of Pancasila as the state ideology (Good category). This finding aligns with research conducted by Doringin and Pangalila (2021), in which 47.7% of students reported being very satisfied and 36.5% reported being satisfied with the debate method, demonstrating that it is received positively by students.

This study has contributed by providing a general overview of student responses to the implementation of the active debate method in the Pancasila course. Based on these findings, lecturers teaching general education courses, such as Pancasila, are advised to incorporate debate as one of their instructional strategies. However, this research has several limitations. The questionnaire was administered only after the debate activities, and data on student responses were collected solely through this questionnaire. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers administer questionnaires both before and after the debate to identify potential changes in student perceptions. Additionally, data collection on student responses could be enhanced by incorporating interview techniques to gain more in-depth qualitative insights.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that student responses to the active debate method in the Pancasila course are in the "Good" category. The students' responses for each measured aspect are as follows: (1) Student Activity and Participation (Good category); (2) Understanding and Analysis of Ideological Concepts (Good category); (3) Critical Thinking and Argumentation Skills (Good category); (4) Communication and Social Attitudes (Very Good category); and (5) Effectiveness and General Impression of the Learning (Good category). The active debate method can be recommended as a viable pedagogical option for lecturers teaching the Pancasila course, fostering a deeper student understanding of the basic concepts of Pancasila ideology and encouraging active student participation in lectures.

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