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Understanding the Self and Imagining the Future: An Exploratory Case Study of the My Dream Project in Pancasila Education

Elis Amani Fajrin[1], Encep Syarief Nurdin[2], Asep Dahliyana[3], Imas Kurniawaty[4], Bunyamin Maftuh[5], Momod Abdul Somad[6]
[1,2,3,4,5,6]Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Pancasila Education provides opportunities for students to reflect on their personal characteristics and envision their futures. However, how students express self-understanding and future aspirations through reflective learning activities remains underexplored. This study explored students' experiences during the Motivation and Imagination stages of the My Dream Project. A qualitative exploratory single-case study was conducted in one Grade VII class involving 40 students at a public junior secondary school in Bandung Regency, Indonesia. Data were obtained from portfolio artifacts and interview summaries, with five students purposively selected from the class for in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Three themes emerged: recognition of personal qualities and areas for development, articulation of personal and family-oriented future aspirations, and willingness to learn and persevere toward personal growth. These findings illustrate how reflective portfolio activities connect students' understanding of themselves with meaningful future aspirations in Pancasila Education. The study contributes context-specific empirical insights and offers practical guidance for teachers to facilitate reflection on students' strengths, developmental needs, aspirations, and possible actions. Further longitudinal research across different schools is needed to examine how expressed aspirations develop into action.

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Corresponding Author:

Encep Syarief Nurdin
General and Character Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia
Email: encep.sn@upi.edu

1. INTRODUCTION

Education at the lower secondary level should not focus solely on knowledge acquisition but should also provide students with opportunities to understand themselves, envision their futures, set goals, and consider possible courses of action to achieve those goals. This developmental process is important because students at this educational level

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begin to develop a clearer understanding of their personal identities, capabilities, interests, and aspirations, which can inform how they perceive their future possibilities. From the perspective of social cognitive theory, students are viewed as individuals capable of planning, directing, and reflecting on their actions through interactions with their social environments [1], [2], [3]. These capacities are associated with self-efficacy beliefs, behavioral self-regulation, and goal orientation, although they do not automatically guarantee that a plan will be implemented [4], [5], [6]. Therefore, educational experiences that encourage self-reflection and future-oriented thinking are important for helping students recognize the relationship between who they are, who they aspire to become, and the choices they may consider in their present circumstances.

A key pedagogical question is how learning can provide students with opportunities to connect their self-understanding with their visions of the future and the choices available to them in the present. Without adequate opportunities for reflection, aspirations may remain wishes that have not yet been translated into purposeful goals or realistic considerations of possible actions [7], [8], [9]. This challenge is particularly relevant in Pancasila Education, which provides a learning context for connecting students' personal development with values, responsibilities, and their roles as individuals and members of society. Beyond understanding Pancasila as a set of civic principles, students can engage with its values through reflective learning experiences that encourage them to recognize their personal potential, consider their responsibilities, and relate their aspirations to meaningful participation in their social environments. In this context, Pancasila Education can be explored as a pedagogical space for understanding how students make sense of themselves and their futures. The focus is not on assuming that students will successfully achieve their goals, but rather on examining their reflective experiences as they recognize aspects of themselves, envision their futures, and begin to consider possible courses of action.

Previous research has established theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding the relationships among future self-representations, goal setting, and reflective learning experiences. Markus and Nurius [9] introduced the concept of possible selves to explain representations of the selves individuals might become in the future, while Oyserman [10] examined how such representations can be associated with behavior when envisioned futures are perceived as relevant and attainable. Within goal-setting theory, Locke and Latham [7], [8] explained the role of goals in directing motivation and action, whereas Morisano et al. [11] investigated personal goal setting, elaboration, and reflection in relation to academic performance. Taken together, these studies establish the importance of future-oriented self-representations and structured goal reflection, while also indicating that envisioning a future and translating it into purposeful action are related but distinct processes.

From a pedagogical perspective, Bell [12], Thomas [13], and Kokotsaki et al. [14] examined project-based learning as an approach that provides opportunities for active engagement and skills development through structured activities. Research on portfolios has also highlighted their relevance as resources for examining students' learning experiences, engagement, and reflection [15], [16]. Nevertheless, project-based learning

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and portfolio-based approaches do not necessarily address the same pedagogical purpose. Project-based learning emphasizes engagement in structured learning activities and the development of skills, whereas portfolios provide opportunities to document and examine learning processes and individual reflections. Although both approaches offer valuable opportunities for student engagement, their application does not automatically establish how students connect personal self-understanding with future aspirations and possible courses of action. Although this literature provides an important foundation, further context-specific exploration is needed to understand how lower secondary school students experience and make sense of reflective activities that connect self-understanding with future aspirations in Pancasila Education. In particular, the intersection between personal reflection, future imagination, and Pancasila-oriented learning remains insufficiently understood through students' own accounts and learning artifacts. Specifically, this study examines how students articulate these meanings through their learning experiences and portfolio artifacts, including how they express aspirations, identify areas for personal growth, and consider possible courses of action without assuming that their written plans have been implemented. Accordingly, the research gap addressed in this study concerns the need to understand students' experiences and meaning-making within a specific pedagogical context, rather than assuming that previous research has entirely overlooked self-reflection, future orientation, or goal setting.

To address this gap, the present study examines the My Dream Project, a reflective learning initiative designed to connect students' self-understanding with their future aspirations through structured learning activities and portfolio documentation. This study explores students' experiences and meaning-making during the Motivation and Imagination stages of the My Dream Project in Pancasila Education. The project is structured around three stages: Motivation, Imagination, and Make Your Dream Happen. However, the research reported in this article focuses exclusively on the first two stages, which were implemented in a single learning session. The distinctive feature of the approach examined in this study is its sequential emphasis on two interconnected reflective processes: recognizing personal characteristics, strengths, and areas for growth during the Motivation stage, and envisioning future possibilities and articulating aspirations during the Imagination stage. The portfolio artifacts provide a means of examining how students express these reflections and connect them with possible courses of action. The Make Your Dream Happen stage is positioned as a subsequent development that integrates students' personal goals with Pancasila Education. Developing this third stage would require longitudinal observation to examine how students consider alternatives, make decisions, undertake actions, and reflect on their efforts to achieve their goals over time. In the stages examined in this study, portfolios serve as learning artifacts for investigating how students articulate their identities, strengths, areas for personal growth, and future aspirations. The interpretation of these experiences is informed by the concepts of human agency and self-regulation within social cognitive theory [2], [4], [3], [6], the concept of possible selves [9], [10], and goal-setting theory [7], [8].

Accordingly, this study aims to explore and understand how lower secondary school students experience and make sense of the Motivation and Imagination stages of the

My Dream Project in Pancasila Education. The contribution of this study lies not in demonstrating improvements in self-efficacy, behavioral changes, or successful goal attainment, but in developing a context-sensitive understanding of how students make sense of reflective experiences, envision their futures, and articulate possible courses of action. Using an exploratory qualitative single-case study design, this research examines learning artifacts and students' accounts while remaining attentive to uncertainties, obstacles, differences in meaning-making, and aspirations that have not yet been translated into action plans. The study contributes to the literature by offering an empirically grounded account of how structured self-reflection and future imagination can be examined within Pancasila Education, while distinguishing students' expressed aspirations from demonstrated actions or achieved outcomes. Accordingly, the study addresses the following central research question: How do lower secondary school students experience and make sense of the Motivation and Imagination stages of the My Dream Project in Pancasila Education, particularly in relation to understanding themselves, envisioning their futures, and articulating possible courses of action?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using an exploratory single-case study design to understand students' experiences and meaning-making during the Motivation and Imagination stages of the My Dream Project in Pancasila Education. The single-case study design was appropriate because the research focused on an in-depth examination of a bounded learning experience within one classroom context, rather than on comparing groups or evaluating the effectiveness of an educational intervention. This approach was chosen to explore how students articulate their self-understanding, envision their futures, and consider possible courses of action within a specific learning context, rather than to measure intervention effectiveness or test causal relationships between variables [17], [18]. Human agency, possible selves, and goal-setting theory served as interpretive lenses, while conclusions remained grounded in empirical evidence. The study was limited to the first two stages of the project and was not intended to establish changes in self-efficacy, successful goal attainment, or the sustainability of students' actions.

2.2. Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted during Pancasila Education lessons in Class VII-I at a public junior secondary school in Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia, involving 40 students. The classroom constituted the bounded case, with the learning activities implemented during a single instructional session. During this session, the Motivation stage focused on fostering engagement and encouraging reflection on students' identities and futures, while the Imagination stage provided opportunities for students to articulate their identities, strengths, areas for personal growth, and aspirations through reflective activities and portfolio development.

Within this classroom context, five students were purposively selected as participants for in-depth interviews based on the relevance of their experiences and their

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potential to provide information-rich accounts relevant to the research questions [18]. This selection was intended to obtain detailed accounts of students' experiences rather than to achieve statistical representativeness. Thus, the 40 students constituted the classroom context of the study, whereas the five students served as interview participants rather than a sample intended to represent a larger population statistically.

The third stage, Make Your Dream Happen, was not analyzed because it would require sustained implementation and ongoing observation of how aspirations are translated into concrete decisions and actions. This limitation maintained alignment among the scope of the case, the available evidence, and the research conclusions [17], [18].

2.3. Learning Activities and Data Collection Procedures

The learning activities were organized into two sequential stages within one Pancasila Education session. During the Motivation stage, students participated in activities designed to encourage engagement and reflection on their personal identities, characteristics, strengths, and areas for development. During the Imagination stage, students were guided to envision their possible futures, articulate personal aspirations, and document their reflections through portfolio activities. The two stages were designed to provide opportunities for students to connect their present self-understanding with their imagined future possibilities.

Data were collected through learning artifacts, including student portfolios, and students' accounts of their experiences, supplemented by observational and researcher-reflection notes where available. The portfolios were analyzed as written representations of students' self-understanding and aspirations, rather than as direct measures of psychological capacities or successful goal attainment.

In-depth interviews were conducted with five purposively selected students to obtain further information about their experiences and interpretations of the learning activities. The interviews explored students' reflections on their personal identities and strengths, their understanding of future aspirations, the reasons underlying their aspirations, and the possible steps they considered toward pursuing those aspirations. Students' accounts were used to deepen the interpretation of portfolio artifacts and contextualize their experiences, while observational and researcher-reflection notes helped illuminate the learning situation and, where applicable, the potential influence of the researcher's positionality on the interpretation. Comparisons across data sources were used to identify both convergences and discrepancies in meaning without assuming that all sources necessarily supported the same conclusions [18], [19].

2.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, which conceptualizes themes as products of the researcher's active analytical engagement with the data and reflection on the perspectives informing the analysis, rather than as categories that automatically emerge from the data [20], [21]. The analysis involved repeated readings of the artifacts and supporting notes, the generation of initial codes for segments relevant to

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the research questions, comparisons across codes, and the development, review, and naming of themes.

More specifically, the analytical process involved several interconnected activities. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by repeatedly reading the student portfolios, interview accounts, and available observational and researcher-reflection notes. Second, relevant segments were coded according to their meanings in relation to students' self-understanding, personal strengths, areas for growth, future aspirations, and possible courses of action. Third, related codes were examined and compared to identify patterns of meaning across the available data sources. Fourth, these patterns were developed into provisional themes and reviewed against the original data to assess their coherence and relevance to the research questions. Finally, the themes were refined and named to represent the central patterns of meaning identified in students' experiences.

For example, statements in which students described their personal strengths or characteristics were coded in relation to self-understanding, whereas statements expressing what students hoped to become in the future were coded in relation to future aspirations. Statements describing possible steps toward achieving those aspirations were examined as expressions of contemplated courses of action rather than evidence of actions already undertaken. Theoretical perspectives on human agency, possible selves, and goal setting informed the interpretation but were not predetermined as themes that had to emerge. The analysis also distinguished among aspirations, goals, plans, and actions actually observed to ensure that interpretations did not extend beyond the available empirical evidence [20], [21], [22].

2.5. Trustworthiness and Researcher Reflexivity

The quality of the study was supported by analytical traceability, attention to context, comparison across data sources, and researcher reflexivity. Each theme was required to be traceable to the specific artifacts, notes, or students' accounts supporting its interpretation. Discrepancies and gaps in the evidence were retained as limitations on interpretation rather than filled with assumptions. The use of multiple data sources supported the examination of students' experiences from different perspectives, while the documentation of analytical decisions helped maintain transparency between the empirical materials and the interpretations presented. The researcher also reflected on their involvement in the learning activities and their expectations regarding the My Dream Project to avoid treating pedagogical intentions as evidence of empirical effectiveness. These principles are consistent with the literature on trustworthiness in qualitative research and the quality of thematic analysis [22], [23], [19], [21].

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations included protecting students' identities, maintaining data confidentiality, and obtaining institutional authorization and informed consent from parents or guardians and students, in accordance with applicable regulations. Students' identities were protected in the research records and reporting to maintain confidentiality. Given the

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researcher's involvement in the learning context, reflexivity was used to consider how relationships with students, interactions during the activities, and theoretical perspectives might influence data collection and interpretation. The reporting of ethical procedures must accurately reflect the measures actually implemented during the study [17], [18], [19].

3. RESULTS

This section presents the findings from the analysis of students' portfolio artifacts and available interview summaries. The analysis identified three interconnected themes concerning students' self-understanding, future aspirations, and developmental orientations during the Motivation and Imagination stages of the My Dream Project. The themes were developed through the identification of meaning units, initial coding, comparison of related codes, and the grouping of codes into broader analytical categories. Portfolio artifacts served as the primary evidence of students' written reflections, while interview summaries provided additional contextual insights into their experiences.

3.1. Self-Awareness: Recognizing Personal Qualities and Areas for Development

The analysis of artifacts P03 and P06 showed that students articulated personal qualities they valued while also identifying aspects they wished to develop. This theme focuses specifically on students' recognition and evaluation of their present personal characteristics, rather than on their future aspirations or intentions to change their behavior. In artifact P03, the extracted data indicated an acknowledgment of personal strengths and weaknesses, a willingness to learn new things, and an expression of perseverance. The student also expressed a desire to improve discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities. Similarly, artifact P06 contained statements about the student's perceived capacity to learn and grow, alongside aspirations to strengthen discipline, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility.

Table 1. Evidence and Initial Coding of Students' Self-Awareness

Data Source	Written Evidence from the Extracted Data	Initial Codes	Analytical Categories
P03, Self-Reflection	Acknowledgment of personal strengths and weaknesses, alongside a desire for self-improvement.	Self-awareness; development orientation	Self-understanding
P03, Self-Reflection	Willingness to learn new things and perseverance in the face of difficulties.	Learning orientation; perseverance	Valued personal qualities
P03, Self-Reflection	Desire to improve discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities.	Areas for development; self-regulation	Personal development aspirations
P06, It's Me	Statements about the perceived ability to learn and grow.	Perceived capacity for growth	Self-perceived capabilities
P06, It's Me	Desire to strengthen discipline, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility.	Self-development aspirations	Personal development goals

The comparison of P03 and P06 indicates that students' self-reflections included both recognition of existing personal qualities and acknowledgment of areas requiring

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further development. P03 documented a willingness to learn and perseverance alongside a desire to improve self-discipline and self-confidence. P06 similarly expressed a perceived capacity for growth and identified responsibility and discipline as qualities to strengthen. These findings suggest that students' written reflections involved more than identifying positive characteristics; they also included an awareness of personal attributes they considered important to develop.

The available interview summaries provided additional contextual information about how students related self-awareness to everyday experiences, including facing challenging tasks, helping peers, and recognizing habits that needed improvement. However, the available documentation did not establish a verified one-to-one correspondence between individual interview participants and the portfolio codes. Consequently, the interview findings are presented as contextual insights rather than as direct confirmation of the experiences documented in P03 or P06.

reflections conveyed both the personal qualities students valued and their aspirations for further development. The available interview summaries also indicated that students described self-awareness in relation to everyday experiences, such as facing challenging tasks, helping peers, and recognizing habits that needed improvement. However, because the verbatim wording of the students' responses had not yet been verified, these accounts were not presented as direct quotations.



Figure 1. The Self-Reflection Artifact Illustrating the Recognition of Personal Qualities and Areas for Development

3.2. Future Aspirations: Personal and Family-Oriented Visions of the Future

The analyzed artifacts showed that students' aspirations were expressed through different orientations, including personal development and hopes concerning family well-being. Rather than being limited to occupational ambitions, students' future-oriented reflections also encompassed relational aspirations involving people they considered important in their lives. These differences were evident in P10's aspiration statement and P03's self-reflection.

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In P10's aspiration statement, the extracted data included the following written statement: "I want to make my parents proud and help them perform the Hajj pilgrimage." This statement reflected an aspiration that connected the student's vision of the future with hopes for their family. In contrast, P03 placed greater emphasis on personal qualities the student wished to develop, including a willingness to learn, perseverance, discipline, and self-confidence.

Table 2. Evidence and Initial Coding of Students' Future Aspirations

Data Source	Written Evidence from the Extracted Data	Initial Codes	Analytical Categories
P10, Notes on Future Aspirations	Desire to make one's parents proud and help them perform the Hajj pilgrimage.	Family-oriented aspirations	Family-Oriented Future Aspirations
P03, Self-Reflection	Willingness to learn and perseverance in the face of difficulties.	Learning orientation; perseverance	Personal Capability Development
P03, Self-Reflection	Desire to develop discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities.	Self-development aspirations	Personal Development Goals

The comparison suggests that future aspirations may be oriented towards both hopes for one's family and the development of personal qualities. P10's aspiration statement expressed hopes involving the student's parents, whereas P03's self-reflection emphasized personal development. From the perspective of possible selves (19), these statements can be interpreted as expressions of students' anticipated futures, including aspirations concerning family and personal growth. The interview summaries also indicated that some students connected their dreams with family expectations and actions they could undertake in the present. However, the relationship between P10's aspiration statement and any specific interview participant could not be established with certainty because the mapping between artifact codes and interview participant codes still required verification.

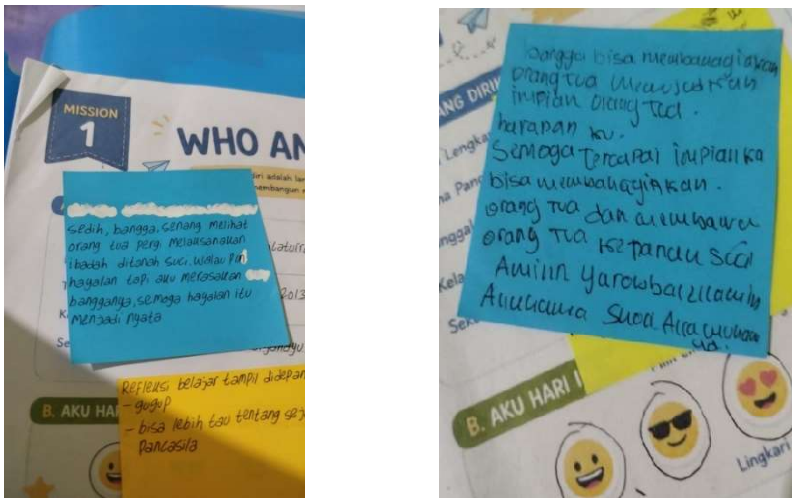


Figure 2. A Student's Future Aspirations Statement Linking Personal Goals to Hopes for Family Well-Being

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3.3. Perseverance and Learning Orientation: Expressing a Desire for Personal Growth

Whereas the first theme focused on students' recognition of their personal characteristics, this theme examines a more specific pattern: the coexistence of a willingness to learn, perseverance, and intentions to strengthen particular personal qualities. Artifact P03 illustrated this pattern through statements about learning new things and persisting in the face of difficulties, alongside a desire to improve discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities.

In the initial coding process, these statements were grouped into two categories: valued personal qualities, encompassing a willingness to learn and perseverance; and qualities the student wished to develop, including discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities. The analytical emphasis was placed on the relationship between students' expressed learning orientation and their stated intentions for further development, rather than on the mere identification of personal strengths and weaknesses.

The available interview summaries provided additional contextual insights into students' experiences of facing difficulties, overcoming procrastination, seeking help, and recognizing the importance of translating intentions into everyday habits. These accounts broadened the interpretation of the portfolio findings by indicating that students' reflections also involved perceived obstacles and considerations about possible ways of responding to them. However, the available evidence did not establish that these interview experiences belonged to the student represented by P03.

This pattern can be discussed in relation to the concept of growth mindset (13). However, statements expressing perseverance and a desire for growth are insufficient to conclude that the student held a stable growth mindset or had changed their behavior.

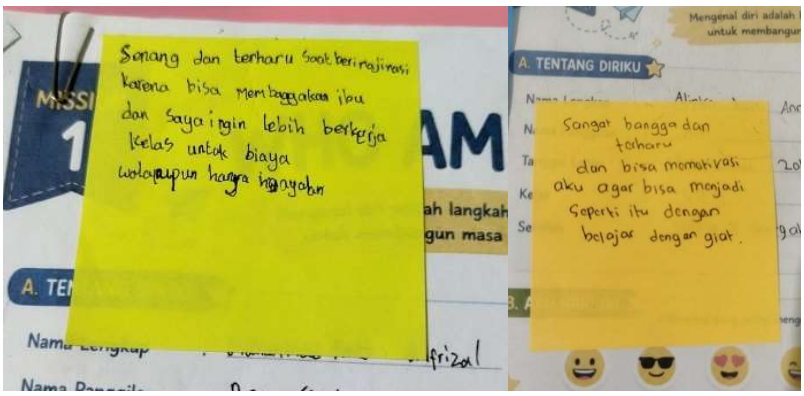


Figure 3. Statements Reflecting Perseverance and Personal Qualities the Student Wished to Develop

3.4. Synthesis of the Findings

The analysis revealed three related but analytically distinct patterns. First, artifacts P03 and P06 documented students' recognition of personal qualities and their identification of areas for development. Second, P10's aspiration statement and P03's self-reflection illustrated variations in future aspirations, encompassing both family-oriented hopes and

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personal development. Third, artifact P03 showed how a willingness to learn and perseverance could coexist with intentions to strengthen other personal qualities.

The three themes therefore represent different dimensions of students' reflective expressions: recognition of the present self, envisioning personally or relationally meaningful futures, and expressing a developmental orientation toward learning and personal improvement. The available interview summaries provided additional context regarding students' experiences of facing difficulties, receiving social support, and navigating the relationship between intentions and actions. However, these accounts could not be individually linked to the portfolio artifacts based on the available documentation.

Taken together, the artifacts and interview summaries offered insights into how students articulated their self-understanding, aspirations, and areas for development. The findings represent students' expressed perceptions and intentions within the learning activities, rather than verified evidence of behavioral change, improved self-efficacy, or successful goal attainment.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Self-Recognition as an Articulation of Personal Qualities and Developmental Needs

The My Dream Project artifacts showed that students articulated personal qualities they valued alongside aspects of themselves they wished to develop. In P03, a willingness to learn new things and perseverance were expressed alongside a desire to improve discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities. In P06, statements about the perceived ability to learn and grow were accompanied by aspirations to strengthen discipline, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility. These findings indicate that students' self-reflections involved two complementary dimensions: recognizing attributes they associated with their present identities and identifying personal qualities they considered important for further development.

These findings can be understood through the concept of multidimensional self-concept, which posits that individuals' perceptions of themselves encompass multiple dimensions and cannot be reduced to a single global evaluation [25]. In this study, the artifacts enabled the researcher to identify the qualities students selected to describe themselves and the aspects they explicitly identified as requiring further development. However, these statements alone do not provide a comprehensive account of students' self-concepts or establish how positively they evaluated themselves.

A comparison with portfolio-based research helps clarify both the contribution and the limitations of these findings. Previous research examined the relationships between e-portfolio use, academic performance, self-efficacy, and student engagement in higher education using a quantitative approach [15]. Meanwhile, research on portfolio-based reflective practices among preservice physical education teachers highlighted the potential of portfolios to examine beliefs, knowledge, and competencies that individuals seek to develop, including the importance of connecting reflection with meaningful action [26]. These studies provide useful points of comparison regarding the role of portfolios in learning, but they differ from the present study in educational context, participants, and

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types of evidence. Whereas these previous studies addressed portfolio use in relation to learning outcomes or professional development, the present study examined the content of lower secondary students' reflections to understand how they represented their personal qualities and developmental needs within Pancasila Education. The My Dream Project study focused on the content of lower secondary students' artifacts to understand how personal qualities and development needs were articulated in writing, rather than to measure the effects of portfolio use on psychological outcomes.

This distinction is also important when interpreting the findings in relation to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage particular situations [5]. P06's statement about the ability to learn and grow may be interpreted as a positive representation of personal capability, but it does not establish the student's confidence in completing a specific academic task or overcoming setbacks. Similarly, P03's desire to improve self-confidence does not demonstrate that the student had low self-efficacy or that self-efficacy increased after participating in the project. Therefore, the empirical contribution of these findings lies in identifying the coexistence of valued personal qualities and explicitly articulated needs for personal development, rather than providing evidence of psychological change.

4.2. Future Aspirations as Representations of Personally and Relationally Meaningful Futures

The artifacts analyzed indicated that students' future aspirations could be oriented towards both family-related hopes and personal development. In P10, the extracted statement read, "I want to make my parents proud and help them perform the Hajj pilgrimage." In contrast, P03 emphasized the desire to strengthen discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities. This contrast demonstrates that students' imagined futures were not limited to individual occupational ambitions but could also involve aspirations connected to family relationships and personal development.

These findings can be discussed in relation to research examining the influence of family on postsecondary educational aspirations among Black and Latino adolescent boys in the United States [27]. That study highlighted the importance of understanding adolescents' aspirations in relation to their families and social environments. Research on children's aspiration profiles published in Social Sciences (2020) also indicated that goals related to the self, family, and social relationships can form diverse configurations of aspirations. Together, these studies provide a rationale for understanding aspirations as diverse phenomena situated within social contexts. However, differences in research design, participant populations, and research focus mean that their findings cannot be treated as direct evidence of the mechanisms underlying the formation of P10's aspirations.

Theoretically, this variation can be understood through the concept of possible selves, which refers to representations of what individuals might become, would like to become, or fear becoming in the future [9]. P10's aspiration can be interpreted as a representation of a future that is meaningful in relational terms, whereas P03's statements highlight personal qualities that the student wishes to develop. Research has emphasized

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the importance of examining the content, priorities, optimism, and specificity of adolescents' hoped-for selves [28]. Research examining the relationship between teacher support and adolescents' strategies for constructing possible selves has also highlighted the importance of connecting future-oriented representations with concrete strategies (Frontiers in Education, 2020). This literature helps distinguish between having aspirations and understanding the steps required to achieve them.

In the present study, P10's artifact did not indicate how the desire to make their parents proud was translated into action, while P03's artifact did not provide evidence of specific strategies or indicators for evaluating progress in discipline and learning abilities. Therefore, the defensible finding is that students' aspirations varied in their orientation, rather than that these aspirations had developed into detailed action plans. The contribution of this finding is its empirical illustration of how lower secondary students articulated both personally and relationally meaningful future aspirations through reflective learning artifacts.

Within the context of Pancasila Education, these findings provide an opportunity to discuss the relationship between personal development, family, and responsibility. However, P10's aspiration does not, in itself, demonstrate the internalization of Pancasila values or the emergence of prosocial behavior. Drawing such conclusions would require additional evidence concerning students' moral reasoning, decision-making, or behavioral practices in real-life contexts.

4.3. Perseverance and Learning Orientation: Distinguishing Developmental Intentions from Actual Change

The P03 artifact showed that a willingness to learn new things and perseverance were expressed alongside a desire to improve discipline, self-confidence, and learning abilities. Unlike the first finding, which emphasized students' recognition of personal qualities, this pattern highlights how students expressed a willingness to develop and strengthen particular capabilities. These findings provide insight into how the student represented the self in writing, but they do not establish how consistently these qualities were demonstrated in everyday behavior.

From a growth mindset perspective, beliefs about the malleability of abilities are associated with how individuals perceive effort, challenges, and failure [24]. P03's statements about willingness to learn and perseverance are conceptually consistent with a developmental orientation. However, this conceptual alignment does not establish that the student held a stable growth mindset. Such a conclusion would require evidence of how the student responded to failure, received feedback, and adjusted strategies when encountering difficulties.

This caution is supported by empirical research. A meta-analysis showed that the relationships between growth mindset and academic achievement, as well as the effects of growth mindset interventions, were more complex than the assumption that believing in the malleability of abilities necessarily leads to substantial improvements in academic performance [29].

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A similar distinction applies to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy concerns individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific actions, whereas growth mindset concerns beliefs about the potential for abilities to develop [5], [24]. P03's statements about perseverance do not directly measure either construct. Therefore, the findings are more appropriately interpreted as an articulation of valued personal qualities and perceived needs for further development, rather than as evidence that the project increased self-efficacy or fostered a growth mindset.

These findings also raise questions about the relationship between aspirations and action. Goal attainment is influenced by goal characteristics, commitment, and feedback [7]. Research based on a meta-analysis of 94 independent tests demonstrated that implementation intentions—plans specifying when, where, and how a behavior will be performed—can help bridge the gap between intentions and action [30]. In the present study, P03's desire to improve discipline did not establish whether the student had formulated specific strategies or monitored progress toward this objective.

The theoretical contribution of this finding lies in clarifying the distinction between developmental orientation, growth mindset, and self-efficacy when interpreting students' written reflections. Its empirical contribution is the identification of how expressions of perseverance and willingness to learn can coexist with recognition of personal qualities that students still wish to strengthen. A more robust analysis of the relationship between reflection, planning, and action would require relevant and mutually corroborating evidence from the Life Project and Action Plan artifacts, together with interview data.

4.4. Integrating Self-Representation, Future Aspirations, and Developmental Orientation

The three findings revealed related but distinct patterns. The artifacts produced by P03 and P06 showed how students articulated personal qualities alongside aspects they wished to develop. P10 and P03 illustrated variations in aspirations that were meaningful in relation to family and personal development, while P03's artifact showed that valued personal qualities could coexist with a desire for further development. Taken together, these findings suggest that the My Dream Project artifacts contained more than lists of aspirations or descriptions of students' strengths and weaknesses.

The concept of self-concept helps explain how students represented their personal qualities [25], whereas the concept of possible selves provides a framework for understanding their representations of hoped-for futures [9]. The growth mindset perspective offers a lens through which to interpret orientations toward the potential for developing abilities [24], while self-efficacy theory and goal-setting theory help distinguish beliefs about the capability to perform specific actions from aspirations concerning desired outcomes [5], [7].

This integration is not intended to establish a new causal model. Rather, its analytical contribution lies in distinguishing among what students expressed about themselves, the futures they envisioned, and the qualities they wished to develop. These dimensions may be interconnected, but the available data do not establish that they constitute sequential stages of psychological development. For example, P10's aspiration

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did not specify the actions the student intended to take to achieve the desired outcome, while P03's desire to improve discipline did not establish that behavioral change had occurred.

Thus, the cross-finding synthesis provides a more detailed understanding of the content of students' reflections while establishing appropriate boundaries for interpretation. The artifacts reveal students' written self-representations and stated aspirations; they do not directly measure psychological constructs or demonstrate behavioral change.

4.5. Theoretical and Practical Contributions to Pancasila Education

The contribution of this study lies in using life-project artifacts to examine how lower secondary school students articulated personal qualities, future aspirations, and developmental needs within Pancasila Education. Unlike studies that quantitatively examine the relationships between portfolio use and learning outcomes or psychological variables, this study focused on the content and patterns of meaning expressed in students' reflective artifacts. This distinction concerns the analytical focus of the research; it does not imply that previous studies have not examined self-reflection or future aspirations.

Empirically, the study identified three patterns: valued personal qualities coexisted with aspects students wished to develop; future aspirations could be personally or relationally meaningful; and expressions of perseverance could occur alongside a desire to strengthen other personal qualities. These patterns provide a context-specific account of how students represented themselves and their envisioned futures through life-project artifacts.

Theoretically, the study clarifies the distinctions among self-representation, possible selves, developmental orientation, and beliefs about the capability to perform specific actions. These distinctions are important because students' statements should not automatically be treated as measures of self-concept, growth mindset, or self-efficacy. Accordingly, the study's contribution is empirical, context-specific, and analytical rather than an attempt to develop or validate a new psychological theory.

Practically, the findings suggest that teachers can use reflective portfolios as learning resources to facilitate students' self-awareness and future-oriented thinking in Pancasila Education. First, teachers can provide structured prompts that encourage students to identify personal strengths and areas for development. Second, students can be invited to articulate aspirations that are meaningful to themselves and their families. Third, teachers can guide students to distinguish between desired outcomes and realistic steps that could be undertaken to pursue those aspirations. Finally, subsequent learning activities can provide opportunities for students to revisit their reflections, document their experiences, and consider whether their initial intentions have developed into actions.

In this way, reflective portfolios can support pedagogical dialogue about personal development, family relationships, responsibility, and the consideration of future choices. However, these activities should be understood as pedagogical opportunities rather than as evidence that students have automatically internalized Pancasila values or achieved behavioral improvements.

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4.6. Research Novelty and Its Position within the Literature

The novelty of this study should be established by comparing its contributions with existing research on reflective portfolios, adolescents' future orientation, possible selves, and personal development. Existing literature has examined portfolios as learning and reflective tools, alongside theoretical perspectives on future-oriented self-representations, beliefs about personal capabilities, and goal setting and attainment [5], [24], [7], [9]. Therefore, the novelty of this study cannot be justified solely by its implementation within the context of Pancasila Education.

Rather, its originality lies in examining the content of students' life-project artifacts as interconnected expressions of present self-understanding, personally or relationally meaningful future aspirations, and developmental orientations within a specific Pancasila Education learning experience. By examining these dimensions together, the study provides an empirical account of how lower secondary students articulate their reflections through a structured pedagogical activity. This focus extends the discussion of reflective portfolios beyond their use as documentation of learning experiences by examining how students represent themselves and their imagined futures in their own written artifacts.

Table 3. Three Dimensions of the Study's Empirical and Analytical Contributions

Dimension	Research Contribution	Limitations of the Claims
Empirical	Identifies patterns in how lower secondary school students articulate personal qualities, future aspirations, and developmental needs through their artifacts.	The findings cannot be generalized to all students based on the limited number of artifacts analyzed.
Contextual	Examines life-project artifacts produced within the context of Pancasila Education.	The findings do not establish that these patterns are unique or exclusive to Pancasila Education.
Analytical	Distinguishes among stated personal qualities, future aspirations, and aspects of the self that students wish to develop.	The study has not developed or validated a new model of psychological development.

Thus, the novelty of this study is best framed as an empirical, context-specific contribution to understanding how students articulate their sense of self and envision their futures through life-project artifacts. Claims that the My Dream Project represents a pioneering approach or generates a new theoretical model cannot be substantiated without a systematic review of the literature and additional evidence.

4.7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the analysis focused on the Motivation and Imagination stages implemented during a single learning session. Consequently, the study could examine students' written self-representations and aspirations but could not establish whether these reflections developed into sustained behavioral changes or successful goal attainment.

Second, the empirical findings were based on the available portfolio artifacts and interview summaries. The correspondence between the five interview participants and the

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individual portfolio identifiers could not be established from the available documentation. Therefore, the findings do not support individual-level comparisons between specific interview accounts and portfolio artifacts. The absence of verified verbatim interview excerpts also limited the presentation of students' voices through direct quotations.

Third, the three themes were developed from a limited number of identified artifacts, with P03 contributing evidence to more than one analytical theme. Although the themes represent different dimensions of reflection, the available evidence does not establish how widely these patterns were shared across all 40 students.

Fourth, the study did not examine the third stage, Make Your Dream Happen. Further research involving longitudinal implementation could investigate how students translate their aspirations into specific goals, develop action plans, respond to challenges, and reflect on their progress over time. Future studies could also examine the relationship between reflective portfolio activities, value-based reasoning, self-efficacy, and students' observable behavior within Pancasila Education.

These limitations do not invalidate the exploratory contribution of the study; rather, they define the boundaries of its empirical and theoretical claims and identify directions for further investigation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored how lower secondary school students expressed self-understanding and future aspirations through the Motivation and Imagination stages of the My Dream Project in Pancasila Education. Three main findings emerged: students' recognition of personal qualities and areas for development, their articulation of personal and family-oriented aspirations, and their expression of willingness to learn and persevere toward personal growth. These findings highlight the contribution of reflective portfolio activities as a learning context in which students can connect self-reflection, meaningful future aspirations, and personal development within Pancasila Education. In practice, teachers can facilitate similar activities by encouraging students to identify their strengths, recognize areas for improvement, articulate meaningful aspirations, and formulate realistic steps toward achieving them. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study involved one class at a single school, examined only one learning session, and relied on the available portfolio artifacts and interview summaries, which limited individual-level comparisons. Future research should involve more participants across different schools and employ longitudinal observations covering all three stages of the My Dream Project to examine how students' expressed aspirations develop into action plans and actual experiences over time.

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