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The Meaning of Pancasila in Civil Society Movements for Strengthening Democracy

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ABSTRACT

In a democratic arena increasingly vulnerable to being hijacked by empty slogans, identity politics, and repression disguised as order, this study critically examines how civil society movements reinterpret Pancasila as a source of moral legitimacy and a practical strategy for reclaiming freedom, testing the accountability of power, and upholding equal rights for citizens as the core of substantive democracy. This study is an interdisciplinary qualitative case study grounded in a multi-perspective approach that combines democracy and social movement theory and is complemented by the lens of hegemony-legitimacy and discourse theory. The results state that Pancasila will not save democracy if it continues to be treated as a mantra of unity that is sterile from conflict, because in an ecosystem of political identity, closed bureaucracy, and digital propaganda, Pancasila is easily hijacked and used as a moral stamp to justify silencing, discrimination, and impunity. Therefore, strengthening democracy requires the activation of Pancasila as an ethical weapon that can be enforced rather than sacralised through concrete indicators of official behaviour, as well as a counter-narrative language capable of subduing hate speech and disinformation through the production of short content, testimonials from local figures, and micro-influencer networks that transform national pride into a commitment to human rights.

A. Introduction

Democracy, as a system of government that places sovereignty in the hands of the people, has never existed as a static entity but is constantly undergoing a dynamic process influenced by a nation's social, political, cultural, and ideological context (Pohle & Santaniello, 2024). In the Indonesian context, democracy cannot be separated from the constitutional values agreed upon since the establishment of the state, namely Pancasila. Pancasila is not only the foundation of the state and national ideology, but also a source of values that should inspire the practice of democracy in Indonesia so that it does not get caught up in procedural formalism alone. However, the development of Indonesian democracy after the reform era shows a growing paradox: the strengthening of formal democratic institutions and mechanisms on the one hand, but the erosion of core values such as social justice, deliberation, unity, and respect for human dignity on the other. This situation raises fundamental questions about the extent to which Pancasila is understood and internalised in contemporary democratic practice, particularly by non-state actors who play a strategic role in public life.

In recent decades, civil society movements have emerged as an essential force in strengthening democracy in Indonesia. Non-governmental organisations, community groups, advocacy movements, and grassroots initiatives play a significant role in promoting political participation, accountability, human rights protection, and control over the state (Desai, 2024). Civil society is often positioned as the fourth pillar of democracy, serving to counterbalance the dominance of the state and the market. However, the dynamics of civil society movements in Indonesia also face serious challenges, ranging from the fragmentation of agendas, ideological polarisation, co-optation by practical political interests, to the penetration of transnational values that are not always in line with Pancasila's ideological character. In such a situation, the interpretation of Pancasila by civil society movements becomes a crucial issue, because the way they understand, interpret, and articulate Pancasila will influence the direction and quality of their contribution to strengthening democracy.

Normatively, Pancasila contains distinctive democratic principles, such as deliberative democracy, respect for plurality, balance between rights and obligations, and an orientation towards social justice (Prakoso et al., 2024). Pancasila democracy does not merely emphasise electoral competition and individual freedom, but also demands collective responsibility and social solidarity (Hadiwasito, 2024). However, in practice, the understanding of Pancasila democracy is often reduced to a mere slogan or narrowly interpreted as a legitimisation of power. This is where it is essential to examine how Pancasila is interpreted by civil society actors who are empirically involved in efforts to strengthen democracy, because they are in a strategic position as a bridge between ideological values and socio-political praxis.

Previous studies on Pancasila and democracy in Indonesia show diverse trends. Several studies place Pancasila as the normative framework of Indonesian democracy and emphasise its relevance as an alternative to the Western liberal democracy model (Basit, 2023; Hefner, 2023; Margiansyah et al., 2025). These studies highlight that Pancasila democracy has a contextual character rooted in a culture of cooperation, deliberation, and a spirit of togetherness. Other studies examine the challenges of implementing Pancasila values in the post-reform political system, including the weakening of political ethics, the rise of identity politics, and the dominance of oligarchy (Budiyono, 2025; Iannone et al., 2025; Qodir, 2025). Such studies generally focus on state actors, formal institutions, or public policy, providing a macro view of the relationship between Pancasila and democracy, but offering relatively little exploration of the ideological praxis at the civil society level (Kurniawan, 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2025; Schäfer et al., 2025).

On the other hand, the literature on civil society movements and democratisation in Indonesia is quite extensive, particularly in analysing the role of civil society organisations in policy advocacy, election monitoring, community empowerment, and the protection of vulnerable groups (Mietzner, 2022; Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023). Recent studies highlight that

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post-reform Indonesian civil society is no longer homogeneous, but instead comprises a spectrum of actors with diverse ideological orientations, strategies, and interests (Chen, 2022; Tabina et al., 2025; Wiranti et al., 2025). Some studies emphasise the success of civil society in promoting democratic consolidation, while others highlight its limitations and ambiguities, including elitist tendencies and a weak social base (DeMattee, 2023; Hefner, 2023; Mietzner, 2022). However, most of these studies emphasise the structural, institutional, and strategic aspects of civil society movements and have not yet thoroughly examined how national ideological values, particularly Pancasila, are interpreted and used as a reference in their practices (Kim, 2024; Mukhlis & Mustofa, 2022; Prakoso et al., 2024).

Studies that explicitly link Pancasila with civil society are generally still normative-descriptive in nature. Several studies emphasise the importance of revitalising Pancasila values in civil society as a bulwark against radicalism, intolerance, and social disintegration (Karimullah, 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2025; Walid, 2022). These studies often assume that Pancasila is a given and homogeneous value, without exploring the dynamic, contextual, and even contestable process of interpretation among civil society actors. Furthermore, there are still relatively few studies that position civil society as an active subject that interprets Pancasila, rather than merely as an object that is expected to accept and implement the values of Pancasila as formulated by the state.

Based on this review, a significant research gap can be identified. First, there is a limitation in empirical studies that specifically explore the meaning of Pancasila among civil society movements involved in strengthening democracy face a limitation. Most studies still focus on Pancasila as a state doctrine or on civil society as an actor of democratisation, but rarely integrate the two into a comprehensive analytical framework. Second, previous studies tend to view Pancasila normatively and statically, thereby failing to capture the dynamics of interpretation, meaning negotiation, and ideological praxis within civil society movements, which are pluralistic and often critical of the state. Third, there are still a few studies that examine how civil society's interpretation of Pancasila directly implies their strategies, agendas, and forms of contribution to strengthening democracy, both at the local and national levels.

Based on these gaps, this study examines Pancasila not only as an ideological text or constitutional norm, but also as a living social meaning reproduced through the practices of civil society movements. This study contributes to the theoretical discourse on Pancasila democracy by enriching it through a constructivist perspective that views ideology as a product of social interaction and collective praxis. Conceptually, this study develops an understanding of the relationship between national ideology and civil society movements by emphasising the interpretive process rather than mere implementation. Methodologically, this study offers an approach that positions civil society actors as reflective subjects with the agency to interpret Pancasila in accordance with the context of the democratic struggle they face. Meanwhile, in practical terms, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for strengthening the synergy between Pancasila values and civil society movements in deepen the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

This study examines how Pancasila is interpreted by civil society movements actively engaged in strengthening democracy in Indonesia. The scope of the study covers the process of interpreting Pancasila values, the factors that influence this interpretation, and its implications for the orientation of movements, advocacy strategies, and the forms of democracy that are developed. This study does not aim to assess the correctness or incorrectness of a particular interpretation of Pancasila, but rather to understand the diversity of meanings that have developed and how these meanings interact with the dynamics of contemporary democracy.

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B. Method

This study is designed as an interdisciplinary qualitative study based on a multi-perspective case study that combines democratic theory (substantive democracy, deliberative democracy, and agonistic democracy) with social movement theory (collective action frames, political opportunity structure, and resource mobilisation), and complemented by the lens of hegemony–legitimacy and discourse theory (critical discourse analysis, political semiotics, and social constructivism) (Asenbaum, 2022; Malthaner, 2023; Wullweber, 2019). The integration of these theories was chosen because the meaning of Pancasila in civil society movements cannot be treated merely as normative knowledge, but rather as a construction of meaning produced, contested, and stabilised through language, symbols, organisational routines, and mobilisation strategies in democratic public spaces.

The focus of the study is operationalised as patterns of interpretation of Pancasila manifested in textual artefacts, institutional practices, and the repertoire of collective actions of civil society movements to strengthen democracy with layered units of analysis covering ideological dimensions (how the principles are translated into concepts of the people, public interest, rights and obligations, plurality, and justice), the organisational dimension (how these interpretations are institutionalised in governance, cadre curriculum, internal deliberation mechanisms, and advocacy ethics), and the dimension of democratic praxis (how these interpretations are realised in policy advocacy, civic education, power oversight, and public communication strategies).

C. Results and Discussion

1. Pancasila as a Tool for Delegitimising Identity Politics in Citizen Advocacy Work

Pancasila has characteristics that are inherently opposed to identity exclusivism, as its values are inclusive, pluralistic, and oriented towards human dignity (Badrun et al., 2023). The first principle affirms belief in God as the foundation of public ethics, respecting the diversity of religious expression without legitimising the monopoly of truth by any one group. The second principle affirms just and civilised humanity as the basis for the recognition of equal rights for every individual, so that discrimination based on identity directly contradicts the concept of moral justice. The third principle places unity as a political project that transcends narrow communal identities and binds citizens in national solidarity. The fourth principle affirms democracy led by wisdom, which epistemically demands deliberative rationality rather than the manipulation of identity sentiments. The fifth principle affirms social justice that rejects structural exclusion and inequality based on origin.

However, the effectiveness of Pancasila as a delegitimisation tool does not emerge automatically. It requires a process of ideological activation through advocacy practices that produce new meanings and connect Pancasila values to citizens' concrete experiences. Civil society organisations play a key role in this process through framing strategies, namely framing Pancasila as a tool for interpreting reality rather than merely as a state symbol. In social movement theory, framing is an interpretive process that makes an issue meaningful and mobilises collective support.

When civil society organisations frame hate speech or discrimination as violations of Pancasila, they not only present normative arguments but also construct a legitimacy frame that shifts public moral preferences. Pancasila is positioned as a common language acceptable across groups and functions as a moral device, making it easier for citizens to see discrimination not as usual but as a deviation from fundamental national values.

The process of transforming Pancasila from a ceremonial slogan into ammunition for public argument is also related to its transformation into symbolic capital in the public sphere. Pancasila as a state symbol has enormous symbolic capital, but that capital is often unproductive when used only ritually. Civil society organisations convert symbolic capital by linking Pancasila to concrete issues such as opposing the persecution of minorities, advocating

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for religious freedom, protecting vulnerable groups, and enforcing civil rights (Hayatullah et al., 2025; Hibbatulloh et al., 2025).

In practice, citizen advocacy that uses Pancasila as ammunition for arguments often moves along three main paths: delegitimising hate speech, delegitimising discriminatory structures, and delegitimising practices of exclusivism in public institutions. The delegitimisation of hate speech is carried out through the production of counter-narratives that expose the logic of exclusion and reveal its socio-political consequences. When certain groups justify the rejection of other citizens on the basis of religion or ethnicity, civil society organisations respond not only with universal human rights language but also with Pancasila narratives that emphasise unity, humanity, and justice as values higher than communal identity (Hibbatulloh et al., 2025). These counter-narratives are essential because in the Indonesian public sphere, some segments of society are more receptive to moral legitimacy derived from Pancasila than to arguments considered foreign or liberal, even when their substance is similar. In this context, Pancasila functions as a bridge language that connects the universality of citizens' rights with national identity.

The delegitimisation of discriminatory structures moves into the realm of policy and institutions, where civil society organisations reject rules or practices that produce inequality based on identity (Rodrigues, 2024). Much discrimination does not occur through direct violence, but rather through regulations, bureaucratic procedures, or informal practices that hinder certain groups' access to public services. In public policy theory, this can be understood as a form of structural power that works through the rules of the game. When civil society uses Pancasila in policy advocacy, they assert that discriminatory policies are not merely procedural errors, but are flawed in their legitimacy because they contradict the principles of humanity and social justice.

The delegitimisation of exclusivist practices in public institutions occurs when civil society organisations challenge the use of certain religious or ethnic symbols as informal prerequisites for access to positions, services, or political participation. In a healthy democracy, identity should not be a condition of citizenship, but in situations of identity politics, substantive citizenship is often curtailed through stigmatisation and exclusion (Jukari et al., 2023). Here, Pancasila can serve as the basis for arguing that public institutions must be neutral and serve all citizens, rather than becoming a space for the reproduction of majority identity domination. Civil society organisations, for example, can link the principles of democracy and unity to reject practices that treat minority citizens as a threat or second-class citizens.

A critical dimension in this discussion is how civil society organisations can shift public acceptance from justifying discrimination to supporting equal rights for citizens. Changing public acceptance requires more than rational argument; it requires shifts in moral frameworks and collective emotions. In social psychology and political communication theory, discriminatory attitudes often persist because they are driven by fear, threats to identity, and repeated stereotypes. Therefore, civil society organisations need to combine Pancasila as an argumentative tool with communication strategies that address the moral-emotional dimensions of the public. They can develop narratives that emphasise that Pancasila is not merely a state document, but a national ethic that protects every citizen from symbolic abuse and violence. When citizens recognise that discrimination violates humanitarian principles and undermines unity, public acceptance of discrimination can shift.

This shift in public acceptance is also related to the concept of norm entrepreneurship in the study of social norms and international relations, namely, the role of actors who promote new norms or revive weakened norms. Civil society organisations can be understood as norm entrepreneurs who encourage the internalisation of Pancasila as a civic equality norm. They not only campaign for ideas but also create new social practices, such as building spaces for dialogue across identities, conducting civic education, or developing anti-discrimination guidelines in communities. These practices produce collective experiences that reinforce the

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norm of equality, so that Pancasila is no longer an abstract symbol but a norm relevant in everyday life.

Epistemologically, treating Pancasila as a tool for delegitimising identity politics also requires a critical reading of its use in Indonesia's political history. Pancasila was once a hegemonic tool when the state monopolised it to control differences, leading some people to view it with suspicion as an instrument of repression. Progressive civil society organisations need to reappropriate Pancasila, that is, take it back from the state's monopoly and return it to the people as a shared democratic value. This process of reappropriation is an essential symbolic political act because, without it, Pancasila could lose its credibility in the eyes of a critical public. When civil society succeeds in presenting Pancasila as a tool for emancipation, rather than domestication, Pancasila regains its moral power to counter exclusive identity politics.

Pancasila can function as a meta-narrative that reorganises the structure of political debate. Identity politics often shifts the discussion from policy issues and public interests to questions of group morality and threats to identity (Wiranti et al., 2025). When Pancasila is activated as a framework for debate, civil society organisations can bring the discussion back to the basic principles of citizenship: everyone has the right to live in safety, be respected, and be recognised as equals (Karimullah, 2023). This is in line with the theory of public deliberation, which emphasises the importance of public reasoning as the basis for joint decision-making. However, utilising Pancasila as ammunition for arguments also faces challenges, especially when identity groups also claim Pancasila to justify exclusivism.

In such situations, Pancasila becomes an arena for contesting meaning. Civil society organisations need to conduct careful interpretation by emphasising the interconnection among the principles, so that no principle is used in a partial way to legitimise the domination of certain groups. For example, if there is a claim that the first principle justifies the supremacy of the majority religion, then civil society organisations need to show that the first principle must be read in conjunction with the second and third principles, which reject discrimination, and the fifth principle, which demands social justice. This integrative hermeneutic approach is essential to prevent exclusive narratives from hijacking Pancasila.

Another strategy often used by civil society organisations is to link Pancasila with the concrete experiences of victims of discrimination to build public empathy. In communication theory, narrative experiences have high persuasive power because they activate emotional identification. When Pancasila is presented not as lofty words, but as real protection against the suffering of marginalised citizens, the public finds it easier to understand its relevance. Civil society organisations can showcase the stories of citizens who have been persecuted for their beliefs. These citizens have been denied access to employment because of their ethnic identity, or poor citizens who are stigmatised as an undesirable group in the social sphere. These stories, when paired with the arguments of Pancasila, produce a moral resonance that reinforces the delegitimisation of discrimination.

In the realm of policy advocacy, Pancasila can be used as a basis for arguments to strengthen the principle of non-discrimination in regulations and public services (Ibrahim, 2022). Civil society organisations can demand the revision of discriminatory rules by showing that these regulations not only contradict the constitution and human rights principles, but also violate the values of Pancasila. This approach strengthens the advocacy position by framing the demand for equality as a national one, not a particular group's.

Pancasila-based advocacy work also requires collaborative strategies to expand its legitimacy. When civil society organisations build coalitions across religions, ethnicities, and classes, they create social proof that Pancasila can serve as a genuine meeting point. Such alliances are unnecessary because identity politics often divides solidarity, while Pancasila requires concrete practices of unity. In movement network theory, coalitions strengthen mobilisation capacity, expand access to resources, and reinforce the resonance of messages.

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When the public sees that various groups can work together in the name of Pancasila, the exclusive narrative that emphasises the impossibility of living together loses credibility.

Pancasila as a tool for delegitimising identity politics also works through the strengthening of social norms in local communities. Much discrimination occurs at the micro level through gossip, stigma, and social pressure. Civil society organisations can activate Pancasila as a community norm by promoting social agreements on respect for differences, rejection of hate speech, and protection of minority citizens. In social norm theory, behavioural change is often more effective when community norms shift rather than when laws are enforced. When communities begin to view hate speech as shameful and contrary to shared values, discriminatory practices can decline significantly.

At the level of digital communication, civil society organisations face a significant challenge because identity politics often spreads quickly and emotionally through social media. Pancasila can be used as a counter-disinformation strategy by building digital campaigns that emphasise citizen equality and reject identity-based hoaxes. However, Pancasila-based digital campaigns must avoid a moralistic, patronising tone, as this can trigger resistance. Civil society organisations need to package Pancasila as a down-to-earth, relevant value that aligns with citizens' experiences, for example, through infographics, short videos, or community stories that show the real impact of discrimination. This strategy transforms Pancasila from a distant state symbol into everyday language that citizens can use to reject hatred.

In the context of political conflict, Pancasila can also be used to dismantle the political economy of hatred that often accompanies identity politics (Karimullah et al., 2025). Hate speech does not always arise spontaneously, but is usually produced by actors who benefit from polarisation. Civil society organisations can use Pancasila to reveal that identity polarisation undermines unity and diverts attention from issues of inequality, corruption, or policies that harm the people. Pancasila as a tool for delegitimising identity politics does not mean rejecting identity as part of social life. Identity is a reality inherent to human beings and can be a source of positive solidarity. What is denied is exclusivism and hierarchy that make identity the basis for denying citizens' rights. Civil society organisations need to distinguish between affirming identity that enriches plurality and politicising identity that produces discrimination.

From the perspective of citizenship theory, Pancasila can be read as the foundation of inclusive citizenship, affirming the equal status of citizens before the state and society. Exclusive identity politics tends to create tiered citizenship, in which certain groups have greater access to protection and resources. Civil society organisations that use Pancasila in their advocacy can reject this tiered citizenship by emphasising that every citizen has the same right to live safely, participate, and have their dignity recognised. This argument is crucial in promoting a transformation of public acceptance, as it shifts the discussion from who is more deserving to how the rights of every citizen should be respected.

The transformation of public acceptance can also be understood through the concept of a moral horizon shift. In moral-political theory, society can change when the ethical boundaries of what is considered acceptable shift. If discrimination was previously regarded as usual due to differences in identity, then civil society organisations need to expand the public moral horizon so that discrimination is understood as an act that damages humanity and unity. Pancasila, when brought to life in advocacy, can serve as a tool to expand this moral horizon because it has a national basis of legitimacy and is acceptable to various groups.

However, the success of Pancasila as an argumentative weapon also depends on the consistency of civil society organisations' own practices. If organisations campaign for equality but are internally exclusive or hierarchical, the credibility of Pancasila as a value will weaken. Therefore, civil society organisations need to display Pancasila not only in external discourse but also in internal governance, for example, by ensuring the representation of vulnerable

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groups, transparency in decision-making, and inclusive deliberation mechanisms. These internal practices build moral authority, making their advocacy more convincing.

2. Pancasila as an Ethical Standard for Official Accountability in Public Service Oversight Campaigns

As an ideology that contains both universal and contextual values, Pancasila has the potential to become a more socially binding ethical standard than a mere technocratic narrative about governance or anti-corruption. Anti-corruption is a critical framework, but it is often perceived by citizens as an elitist, abstract issue or solely a matter for law enforcement, limiting citizen participation to moral support rather than practical involvement (Al Hamid et al., 2025). Furthermore, the anti-corruption framing tends to emphasise legal violations and criminal behaviour. In contrast, many public service issues take the form of maladministration, subtle nepotism, conflicts of interest, or service discrimination, which do not necessarily fall into the narrow category of corruption. Pancasila, on the other hand, can connect public service issues with everyday moral dimensions that are closer to citizens' experiences. When public service oversight campaigns use Pancasila as an ethical standard, citizens are not only encouraged to hate corruption but also to defend their dignity and rights as equal citizens.

Translating Pancasila into indicators of official behaviour requires a conceptual approach that combines normative ethics, governance theory, and organisational behaviour studies. In public ethics, fundamental principles such as integrity, honesty, fairness, and responsibility must be realised in observable and measurable practices. Thus, Pancasila needs to be operationalised through behavioural and procedural indicators to be used in public oversight campaigns. These indicators must also be able to link moral values with relevant administrative procedures, for example, linking the principle of social justice with budget transparency and access to services, or linking the principle of humanity with the protection of whistleblowers and the prevention of persecution of critical citizens.

The first principle, Belief in One God, is often understood as the spiritual foundation of the state. Still, in public ethics, it can be translated as a principle of integrity and moral awareness that office is a mandate, not a right. In terms of official behaviour indicators, the first principle can be realised through a commitment to honesty, a prohibition on data manipulation, a rejection of gratuities, and a willingness to act transparently because one feels bound by a morality that transcends administrative sanctions. This integrity can be measured through the practice of asset reporting, openness in the procurement process, and officials' consistency in complying with the code of ethics. In oversight campaigns, the first principle can be packaged as a mandate of office, emphasising that budget and data transparency are not mere procedures but moral obligations to avoid betraying public trust.

The second principle, Just and Civilised Humanity, provides the foundation for ethical service standards that respect citizens' dignity. In the context of public services, the second principle can be translated into indicators of non-discrimination, service accessibility, equal treatment for vulnerable groups, and secure complaint mechanisms. One relevant key indicator is the protection of whistleblowers and complainants from intimidation. Many citizens are reluctant to report, not because they do not care, but because they fear social and administrative consequences, especially if officials hold power over basic services. The second principle requires the state to treat citizens as dignified subjects, so the complaint system must guarantee confidentiality, prevent retaliation, provide channels for redress, and ensure humane follow-up.

The third principle, Indonesian Unity, can be operationalised as a principle against conflicts of interest and nepotism that undermine social cohesion. Conflicts of interest often appear technical, but in fact they undermine unity by turning the state into an arena for distributing benefits to specific groups, rather than a shared home. Relevant indicators of official behaviour include declarations of conflicts of interest, restrictions on holding multiple

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positions or business affiliations related to public service decisions, disclosure of family relationships in government projects, and cooling-off period policies for officials who move to the private sector. From the perspective of unity, nepotism and conflicts of interest create insiders and outsiders, turning public services into a tool for distinguishing social status rather than a universal right. A monitoring campaign linking conflicts of interest to the principle of unity can broaden citizens' understanding that the abuse of office is not merely a loss of state funds but a social harm that undermines national solidarity.

The fourth principle, Democracy Led by the Wisdom of Deliberation/Representation, directly addresses participatory, deliberative, and rational public decision-making processes. In terms of official behaviour indicators, the fourth principle can be translated into data transparency and transparency in decision-making, such as the provision of budget information, work plans, service performance indicators, and meaningful public consultation mechanisms. The development planning forum (musrenbang), for example, is normatively a space for citizens to deliberate on development priorities. Still, it often becomes a formality because information is not transparent, the agenda is predetermined, or participation is limited. Within the framework of the fourth principle, officials are considered accountable if they provide data before the forum, explain policy choices with public reasoning, allow room for evidence-based criticism, and record and follow up on citizens' suggestions. Oversight campaigns that emphasise the fourth principle can encourage citizens to see Musrenbang not just as an event, but as a deliberative right that must be upheld.

The fifth principle, Social Justice for All Indonesian People, serves as the strongest evaluative principle for the quality of public services. Social justice demands the equitable distribution of benefits, access to services, and opportunities, as well as the correction of inequalities resulting from discriminatory policies or practices (Aminah et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2025). Relevant indicators of official behaviour include needs-based budget transparency, publication of beneficiary data, service inequality maps, and fairness-based evaluation mechanisms such as policy impact analysis on poor and vulnerable groups. Social justice is also related to officials' ability to respond promptly and appropriately to residents' complaints, as service delays often have a greater impact on groups without alternative resources (Suyahman et al., 2025). A campaign based on the fifth principle can position budget transparency not merely as a matter of numbers, but as a matter of justice: who gets what, why, and how to improve it.

The translation of principles into concrete behavioural indicators must be formulated within an operational framework so that citizens can use them in their oversight practices. From a governance perspective, indicators such as budget transparency and data openness are prerequisites for social accountability because they enable citizens to access information to formulate evidence-based criticism. Budget transparency does not only mean that the regional budget document is available, but also that the information is easy to understand, relevant to citizens' needs, presented promptly, and traceable to the programme or activity level. Data openness includes service performance, procurement, beneficiary, complaint and follow-up data. Anti-conflict-of-interest requires rules and practices that prevent officials from making decisions that benefit themselves or their groups. Whistleblower protection ensures that citizens who exercise their right to criticise are not punished socially or administratively. These four indicators can be seen as a bridge between Pancasila ethics and modern accountability mechanisms.

The translation of principles into indicators can also be strengthened through the concept of value-based accountability, which combines virtue ethics and deontological ethics. Virtue ethics emphasises the character of officials, such as integrity, fairness, and empathy, while deontological ethics emphasises procedural obligations such as transparency and non-discrimination. Pancasila can bridge the two by demanding both character and commitment. For example, budget transparency is not only a procedural (deontological) obligation, but also

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a manifestation of trustworthy character (virtue). Whistleblower protection is not only a rule, but a manifestation of humanity. Anti-conflict of interest is not only about compliance but also a manifestation of unity and justice.

Pancasila-based campaigns can utilise public value theory in public administration, which emphasises that the government must create public value rather than just efficiency (Prakoso et al., 2024). Transparency, data openness, and citizen participation can be understood as public values that increase social trust. When campaigns link Pancasila with public value, citizens can see that service oversight is not merely about finding fault, but about maintaining the quality of public values such as justice, trustworthiness, and social cohesion. This is important because citizen participation often declines when oversight is perceived as merely a conflict with officials. With Pancasila framing, oversight can be positioned as a critical collaborative effort to improve services grounded in shared values.

Another key to the success of framing Pancasila is the campaign's ability to link indicators of official behaviour to citizens' real experiences with public services. Many citizens are not interested in the term budget transparency unless they see its connection to damaged roads, long queues, schools lacking facilities, or social assistance that does not reach its intended recipients. Civil society organisations can translate indicators into down-to-earth narratives: openness of data on aid recipients means preventing people experiencing poverty from being overlooked; transparency in procurement means preventing poor projects; anti-conflict of interest means preventing projects from falling into the hands of officials' families; whistleblower protection means citizens are not afraid to complain when they encounter difficulties.

In comparison, anti-corruption framing is often effective in mobilising public anger and support, but not always in building stable participatory behaviour. Pancasila has the potential to be more effective in fostering stable participation because it provides a broader basis for identity and moral legitimacy. However, this does not mean that anti-corruption framing should be abandoned; it is more appropriate to combine the two in a hierarchical message structure. Pancasila can be a broad value framework, while anti-corruption becomes one of the practical consequences of violating those values. Thus, campaigns can assert that corruption is a form of betrayal of trust, humanity, unity, deliberation, and social justice. This will broaden the meaning of anti-corruption from a legal issue to an ethical civic issue, while maintaining a firm stance against violations.

Strengthening the campaign also requires a strategy for organising citizens. In social movement theory, participation increases when networks, collective norms, and a sense of togetherness are present. Framing Pancasila can help build a collective identity as citizens who practise Pancasila and monitor public services (Hamzani et al., 2025). This identity is important because monitoring is often risky and exhausting when done individually. When citizens see oversight as a dignified collective action, they are more likely to persevere. In addition, the identity of Pancasila can reduce the stigma attached to oversight activists, who are often seen as troublemakers. If the campaign succeeds in normalising oversight as a democratic practice, participation will increase.

At the same time, translating Pancasila into indicators of accountability also requires institutional support so that citizens do not stop at symbolic participation. Data openness requires open data policies; budget transparency requires accessible formats; whistleblower protection requires legal and administrative mechanisms; and development planning requires proper deliberative design. This means that Pancasila, as an ethical standard, must be accompanied by governance reforms that enable citizens to participate effectively. Otherwise, citizens may become frustrated, and the power of the Pancasila framework will erode.

From the perspective of communication impact evaluation, the effectiveness of framing Pancasila can be seen from changes in social norms, not just changes in attitudes. If citizens begin to consider transparency and participation as usual, then the campaign has succeeded

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in shaping the norm of accountability. If officials begin to feel ashamed or morally pressured when withholding data, then Pancasila has functioned as a device to delegitimise unaccountable behaviour. Such changes in norms are significant because enforcement alone is not enough to change the culture of bureaucracy. Pancasila has the potential to strengthen the culture of shame towards abuse of authority because it touches on aspects of identity and morality.

3. The Battle for the Meaning of Pancasila in the Social Media Ecosystem Through the Counter-Narrative Strategy of Civil Movements

Pancasila is often used as propaganda to justify repression through specific framing mechanisms that link criticism to threats to unity or stability (Adiprasetio, 2025). In this kind of framing, civil liberties are positioned as excessive freedoms, human rights are suspected of being a foreign agenda, and civil society is labelled as a source of unrest. This strategy exploits public psychological biases, such as the need for closure and the tendency to seek order in the face of social uncertainty. In moral panic theory, this kind of propaganda constructs a folk devil figure in the form of activists, critical journalists, or minority groups who are portrayed as sources of chaos. Pancasila is then presented as a moral shield to legitimise restrictions on freedom in the name of unity, with the state having the right to restrict dissenting voices. At this point, Pancasila is distorted from its values of deliberation and justice into a tool of control that closes the space for deliberation. Civil movements must break this logic by showing that unity is not uniformity and that order is not silencing, but rather conditions that require protecting citizens' rights so that conflicts can be managed peacefully.

The counter-narrative of the civil movement in the social media ecosystem can be understood as an attempt to reframe Pancasila, that is, to present it as a narrative of civil liberties, pro-human rights, rather than as a justification for control. Reframing means shifting the focus of interpretation from Pancasila as a tool for state stability to Pancasila as a civic ethic that protects human dignity and guarantees political participation (Mahfud & Heryansyah, 2025). A compelling counter-narrative must bridge two needs at once: maintaining the legitimacy of Pancasila as a national value and defining it in a way compatible with the principles of substantive democracy. This requires a communication strategy that combines normative language (values and principles) with experiential language (concrete stories), because social media audiences respond more readily to narratives that are close to their daily lives than to ideological abstractions.

The characteristic of social media, which relies on short content, requires civil movements to develop a model of message production that is concise but meaningful (Habermas, 2022). Short content does not mean shallow. Instead, it requires the skill to summarise complex messages into a format that is easy to digest, remember, and share. Here, the concept of compression in digital communication becomes essential: how to translate Pancasila values into slogans, visuals, or video clips that can spread quickly without losing their essence. Memes and short videos function as cultural units that can be replicated, modified, and disseminated across communities. From a memetic perspective, memes are forms of ideas that compete to survive in the attention ecosystem. The winning meme is not always the most correct, but the one that is most easily replicated and most emotionally resonant.

Memes have political power because they combine humour with criticism, thereby reducing the public's psychological resistance to overly serious messages (Karimullah, 2024). Humour serves as a softening strategy, making messages more acceptable without triggering defensiveness. In the elaboration likelihood model, humour can play a role in the peripheral pathway, facilitating message acceptance when the audience lacks strong motivation to think deeply. However, the peripheral effect can serve as a gateway to deeper processing when memes spark curiosity and lead to further discussion. Civil movements can use memes to

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highlight contradictions, for example, by pointing out the irony of Pancasila being used to silence criticism, given that the fourth principle calls for deliberation and wisdom.

Apart from memes, short videos are a very dominant format because platform algorithms tend to prioritise audiovisual content that increases engagement duration. Short videos can combine narrative, emotion, and visual evidence in a short time. To reclaim the meaning of Pancasila, short videos can be designed as micro-stories that showcase snippets of citizens' experiences related to civil liberties, such as citizens denied their right to assemble, journalists intimidated, or communities attacked because of their beliefs. However, what distinguishes the counter-narrative of Pancasila from mere universal human rights activism is the explicit linking of these experiences to the values of Pancasila, for example, linking the protection of minority citizens to the second and third principles, linking freedom of expression to the fourth principle, and linking access to justice to the fifth principle. This link builds national resonance, so the message is not easily refuted by claims that human rights are a foreign concept.

Video testimonials from local figures play a special role in the counter-narrative strategy because they utilise the principles of source credibility and social proximity. Many netizens trust figures they are culturally familiar with, such as moderate religious leaders, teachers, local activists, MSME actors, traditional leaders, or community influencers, more than national figures who are considered elitist or partisan. In the two-step flow theory, public opinion is often formed through opinion leaders who bridge media information to the community. Micro-influencers and local figures can be effective opinion leaders because their relationships with their audiences are more intimate, their levels of trust are higher, and their communication styles are more down-to-earth. When local figures articulate Pancasila as the reason why citizens' rights must be protected, the message becomes harder to attack as mere political propaganda, because it originates from a social authority close to citizens' lives (Ghaffari et al., 2025).

Micro-influencers are important not because they have a large number of followers, but because of their high level of community engagement. In network analysis, micro-influencers often serve as nodes that connect sub-communities, enabling messages to spread across multiple clusters. Civil movement strategies must utilise micro-influencers to build message distribution that does not depend on a single large account. This is relevant because digital repression often targets large activist accounts through mass reporting, doxxing, or buzzer attacks. With a network of micro-influencers, counter-narratives become more resistant to attacks because they spread in a decentralised manner. This decentralisation is in line with the character of civil movements, which rely on community networks rather than hierarchical structures. When each community has its own meaning producers, Pancasila as a narrative of civil liberty can take root more strongly and is not easily severed by a single attack.

Community networks are an essential foundation because social media is not only a space for communication but also for the formation of collective identity. In social identity theory, people tend to accept messages that reinforce their group identity and reject those they perceive as threatening to their group. Identity politics and repressive propaganda often exploit group identity to build fear of outsiders (Karimullah et al., 2023). The Pancasila counter-narrative must respond by creating an inclusive national identity as a broad ingroup, so that citizens do not feel they must choose between communal and national identities. Pancasila can be used to build an identity of equal citizens that transcends religion, ethnicity, and class. This narrative must be produced not only in the form of messages, but also in the form of community practices: for example, online discussions, voter learning spaces, petition campaigns, or peaceful actions that show that civil liberties are a shared project.

Counter-narrative strategies must also take into account the logic of algorithms that affect content visibility. Algorithms tend to promote content that triggers emotional reactions and rapid interaction. Repressive propaganda often exploits anger, fear, and hatred because

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negative emotions tend to be more viral. Pro-democracy counter-narratives must find ways to compete without mimicking hatred. This requires creativity in harnessing positive emotions such as hope, pride, and solidarity, as well as moral emotions such as empathy and a sense of justice. Content that shows citizens' courage in fighting injustice, communities' success in promoting openness, or stories of unity across identities can trigger positive emotions that are also viral.

In the face of disinformation, counter-narratives need to integrate the inoculation theory approach, which is an information vaccine strategy that strengthens public resilience to hoaxes. Disinformation about democracy and human rights often works by presenting false information that appears logical, then reinforcing it through repetition. Civil movements can create short content that not only refutes hoaxes but also teaches how hoaxes work, for example, by explaining techniques such as cherry-picking, context manipulation, or the use of Pancasila terminology to justify anti-democratic actions. When the public understands the mechanisms of manipulation, they are more resistant to new hoaxes. This approach is more effective than simply debunking, because debunking is often too late and sometimes reinforces hoaxes through repetition. Inoculation content can be created in the form of educational memes, 30-second videos, or concise threads that teach how to check sources, read data, and recognise propaganda.

The battle over the meaning of Pancasila must also be understood as a long-term process because changing discourse requires repetition and institutionalisation. Viral content is not enough to defeat propaganda that works every day. Civil movements need to build a sustainable content ecosystem. In addition, they need to train digital cadres who are capable of producing content independently. From a capacity-building perspective, the sustainability of counter-narratives depends on the community's ability to create content and maintain solidarity. If content depends on only a handful of creators, the movement is vulnerable to fatigue and attacks. Conversely, if the wider community is involved, counter-narratives become part of the culture.

D. Conclusion

The interpretation of Pancasila in civil society movements cannot be reduced to a static normative discourse, but rather to an ideological construct strategically reproduced through advocacy practices, public service oversight, and narrative contestation in the digital space to strengthen substantive democracy. Pancasila has proven to be an effective tool for delegitimising identity politics that normalises hate speech and exclusivism, as well as an ethical standard for official accountability, grounded in concrete behavioural indicators such as budget transparency, data openness, anti-conflict-of-interest policies, and whistleblower protection. Even in the social media ecosystem, Pancasila can be reclaimed from propaganda justifying repression through counter-narratives based on short content, testimonials from local figures, micro-influencers, and community networks that link Pancasila with civil liberties and human rights.

These findings implicitly enrich and refine previous studies that tended to separate Pancasila as a state ideology from civil society movements as actors of democratisation, by offering a novelty in the form of a conceptual model of the activation of Pancasila as ammunition for public argument and a framework for evaluating democratic practices that links the dimensions of discourse, institutions, and citizen behaviour in an integrated manner. Thus, its scientific contribution lies in expanding the constructivist-framing perspective in the study of Pancasila democracy and in strengthening the understanding that ideology works effectively when it becomes a language of collective action that can be accounted for and verified. In practical and policy terms, this synthesis implies that strengthening democracy requires an advocacy design that combines Pancasila literacy, protection of civil liberties, and governance reform based on transparency and deliberative participation. Civil society

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organisations need to institutionalise Pancasila as an evidence-based oversight framework and as a communication strategy adaptable to social media algorithms. In contrast, the government needs to position data openness, secure complaint mechanisms, and public deliberation spaces as an ethical-ideological mandate, not merely administrative compliance.

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