



ENHANCING STUDENT'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE USE OF ETHICAL DILEMMA IN ROLE PLAYING LEARNING MODEL AT SMKN DARANGDAN

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Abstract. A crucial problem of education in Indonesia is the low quality of learning, therefore innovation in learning model is needed to solve this problem. This study investigates the enhancement of students' learning experience through the integration of ethical dilemma within role-playing learning model as a learning innovation. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire, and the result were analyzed through descriptive statistics with IBM SPSS software, yielding a mean score of 3.83. According to the Likert Scale, a score within the range of 3.41 – 4.20 indicated positive agreement, demonstrating that students generally concurred that ethical dilemma in role-playing learning model positively impacted their learning experience. In the qualitative phase, data were gathered through interviews, providing deeper insights into student's' perspectives of their experiences. The students expressed that the role-playing model incorporating ethical dilemmas enhanced their understanding by requiring them to comprehend of knowledge, as students were able to practice real-world decision-making skills in applying. Additionally, the model also encouraged reflecting, enabling students to evaluate and discuss their chosen solutions. Conducted at SMKN Darangdan with sample of 25 students, this study concludes that using ethical dilemma in role-playing learning model effectively improves students' learning experience, particularly in understanding, applying, and reflecting.

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INTRODUCTION

The most crucial problem in Indonesia education is the low quality of learning (Madhakomala et al., 2022; Rafsanjani & Rozaq, 2024). A professor from Harvard University, Lant Pritchett in his research even revealed that Indonesia's learning quality is 128 years behind developed countries (Ardhiya et al., 2022). The low quality of learning has an impact on the low learning experience that students get. Students see education only as a routine where they come, sit, listen, take notes and then go home but once at home, what they learn is forgotten (Budiningsih, 2006). The quality of learning must be improved so that learning activities are not carried out monotonously and conventionally.

Learning activities at school must provide deep meaning for student. The essential meaning of education is to provide as many learning experiences as possible to students, and not on what the students mention (Abdurrahmansyah, 2023). Memorizing many things on learning does not guarantee that students will get a valuable learning experience. In fact, student learning experience is one of the indicators of good quality education (Zerihun et al., 2012). Learning is not just memorizing a number of fact or information. Learning is doing; obtaining certain experiences in accordance to learning goals.

Deep learning is used as an approach in the Indonesian curriculum to improve the quality of education. The deep learning approach, which emphasizes meaningful and mindful learning experiences, is very relevant to be applied in the Indonesian educational context (Suwandi et al., 2024). The deep learning approach in Indonesia states that learning experiences are created

through the process of understanding, applying, and reflecting (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic Indonesia, 2025). These three stages of the process as show in Figure 1, can be indicators of the quality learning. Learning must be done as well as possible so the students can have a meaningful, in depth and enjoyable learning experience. The teacher should understand the importance of learning innovation for better quality of learning (Montonen & Eriksson, 2013). So, it is important for the teachers to choose or make the best learning model to improve their student's learning experience.



Figure 1. Three Aspects of Learning Experiences in Deep Learning (Source: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic Indonesia, 2025)

Role-playing learning model is one of the learning models that has been proven effective to be used in learning (Chan, 2012; Rikmasari et al., 2021). This learning model can be applied to all levels of education, from elementary school to high school, because it can accommodate the characteristic of student. In addition, it can also help improve student engagement, interest, and learning outcomes. Because role-based learning allows students to use their imagination and appreciation in playing roles to encourage them to improve their best potential through this model of learning. The role-playing learning models also can encourage student to express their feelings and lead to awareness through spontaneous engagement and analysis of real life problem situations (Berry & Kowal, 2022; Rumore et al., 2016; Shaftel & Shaftel, 1952).

Education always needs learning innovations that demand creativity and create methods that can be used to improve the quality of education (Lindfors & Hilmola, 2016; Ruano-Borbalan, 2019; Serdyukov, 2017). Role-playing as an effective learning model can be innovated to be more effective, as the example is an ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. Ethical dilemmas are difficult situations where no choice is completely right or wrong. So that individuals must know and choose between alternatives that both are right answers, and face emotional impacts such as anger, frustration, and fear during the process of making rational decisions that must be made (Wijaya et al., 2022).

Ethical dilemma is also a situation that happened and someone have to choose one of some options, that all the option are right but contradictory. Ethical dilemma have often been applied in education to see if students are able to understand and resolve the ethical dilemmas (Pinkus et al., 2004). Therefore, the use of ethical dilemma in role-playing learning model creates a pedagogical space that allows student to not only understand theoretical concepts, but also apply them in a complex context that simulates social reality. Ethical dilemmas in role playing learning usually arise when students are faced with situations that require making difficult moral decisions, such as choosing between following social norms, following personal desires, or facing conflicts between honesty and confidentiality (Sandisasmita et al., 2024). Because no doubt when students receive knowledge and will construct this knowledge into an understanding and attitude, they must be faced with ethical dilemmas.

As the leader in the classroom, it is the teacher who has the task to design and design learning as well as possible so that students can have a meaningful, deep, and enjoyable learning experience. Thus, it is important for teachers to think about and choose the right learning model in improving their students' learning experience and outcomes. Contextual learning through the

ethical dilemma in role playing learning model can be a strategic choice that can be applied in maximizing and optimizing learning objectives. Contextual-based learning, which was initially initiated by Mark Baldwin and later developed by Jean Piaget, when viewed from a psychological point of view, is based on the flow of cognitive psychology because the underlying philosophy, namely constructivism, states that the active role of the subject forms knowledge because of the individual's understanding of his environment (Zunidar et al., 2021). This means that students do not passively receive knowledge from their environment, then the knowledge will be meaningful when discovered and built by the students themselves. Students' knowledge obtained from the delivery of others is less functional, because students already have knowledge from previous experiences.

The use of role-playing in education has been proven effective, this learning model has been used in many countries around the world. As example, research by Cai shows role-playing in education can increase students' knowledge in China (Cai et al., 2025). Then research in United Kingdom by Raposo shows role-playing in education increases student participation in the classroom (Raposo, 2025). Furthermore, research by Panjindawan and Langprayoon in Thailand and research by Sarifudin and Setyawan in Indonesia both shows that role-playing can affect students' speaking skill (Panjindawan & Langprayoon, 2025; Sarifudin & Setyawan, 2025). However previous studies show that the use of role-playing as learning model is often monotonous, which as role-playing is simply used without any innovations in education.

There is a previous study have also included ethical in role-playing by Casan and Forment, it shows that the application ethical in role-playing increases dilemmas and critical thinking skill of students (Casañ & Alier Forment, 2023). However, no research of used ethical dilemma in role-playing to be found and no research has explored how the integration of ethical dilemmas in role-playing learning model affects students' overall learning experiences. Therefore, this study is very relevant and urgently needed because students' learning experience is playing an important role in deep learning. The ethical dilemma in role-playing learning model is a strategy of learning innovation to enhance students' meaningful learning experience, understanding of ethical values, and social behavior. This leaning innovation can be not only encouraging active engagement and cooperation among students. It also helps in developing critical thinking and moral decision-making skill in real life situation. A follow-up study is needed to ensure the all of benefits.

Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively explore the potential of ethical dilemma in role-playing learning model in enhancing students' learning experience on three aspects: understanding, applying, and reflecting. The theoretical contribution in education, this study is to provide a structural framework that can be used by teachers in learning as reference and build upon. This study also connecting ethical dilemma reasoning with role-playing methodologies as a bridges two important things, show how moral complexity can enhance active learning experience. In practical educational, this study demonstrates concrete ways that educator can innovated learning model go beyond traditional lecture-base instruction. This finding can also apply on teaching practices across various field as business ethics, public policy, and social work or whatever ethical decision making is crucial. The last, this study appear to offer both immediate practical values for teacher and long term theoretical contributions to the fields of education and experimental learning pedagogy.

RESEARCH METHODS

The location of this research is SMKN Darandan in Purwakarta, West Java - Indonesia. The number of students who became the sample of this study is one class of the tenth grade, which are 25 students. This research using mixed methods, which are quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative method is used questionnaires, while qualitative method is direct interview to the students. Both methods had relation as show in Figure 2 and used to obtain accurate results in measuring and knowing in depth the student learning experience. The questionnaire in the study used the google form online, using Likert scale. The questionnaire questions consist of 10 questions to know students learning experience with aspects that become indicators, the aspects are understanding, applying, and reflecting. All statements in the questionnaire are positive. The



understanding aspect has four questions, the applying aspect has three questions, and the reflecting aspect has three questions. Each question has alternative answers which are strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The determination of the score in processing the Likert scale survey data results, namely SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, and SD=1. The results of the data obtained were then processed by descriptive statistics analysis using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Then the interview in this study was doing by asking questions directly to students about students' learning experiences after they did the ethical dilemma in the role playing learning model. Then, all of student's interview answer are analyzed and described to know their understanding, applying, and reflecting.

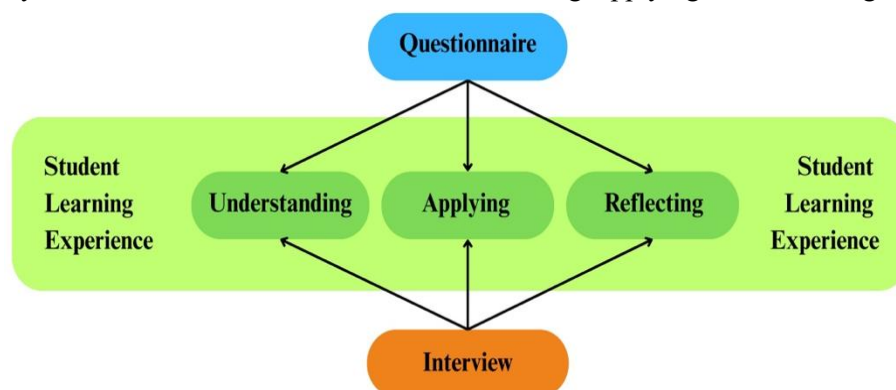


Figure 2. Methods relation in this research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of Ethical Dilemma in Role Playing Learning Model

Learning experience can be interpreted as student interaction with the learning environment (Ning & Downing, 2011). One of the keys of student learning experiences is designing effective learning by using a variety of content to build a new and meaningful knowledge (Leow et al., 2016). Role playing is one of the learning models that has been proven effective (Cherif & Somervill, 1995; Greco, 2009; Mutoharoh & Anfasya, 2025). Then the researcher used ethical dilemma on the role-playing learning model as an innovation to find out how the results of students' learning experience on this learning innovation.

This research was conducted by giving an ethical dilemma scenario to students. The title of ethical dilemma is "Building Modern Market (Malls) in Near Traditional Market: Between City Development or Saving the Economy of Traditional Market". For the role-playing, all students have their own roles and dialogs that can be seen in Figure 3 as documentation photos. The roles are one person as a mayor, four people as local government, five people as mall builders, five people as traditional market traders, five people as community leaders, five people as townspeople. The ethical dilemma experienced by students is as follows:

Modern market (mall) will be built in Makmur city by PT Gemilang Jaya, which will open up job vacancies, a symbol of the city development, and a potential increase of Regional Income. However, the Mall is located near a small and dirty traditional market, making the traders of traditional market worry that they will lose competitiveness because consumers will be more interested in modern markets than traditional market. Then the public discussion about this problem were held by the Mayor of Makmur City, Regional Government, Traditional Market Traders, PT Gemilang Jaya, Community Leaders, townspeople of Makmur City.

The ethical dilemma experienced by students consists of three options. The first option is mall construction is continued, the aspirations of traditional market traders are rejected (emphasis on rule enforcement and progress). In this first option students chose to rule of the law must be strictly enforced above all else. The second option is mall construction is postponed with hygiene guidance for traditional markets (priority of guidance and the law). In this second option, students prioritize the interest of the traditional traders by providing opportunities to improve the situation. The third option is mall construction is canceled to protect traditional market vendors (priority on

protecting the economy of the traditional traders). In this third option, students chose to support traditional traders by cancelling the construction of the mall.

At the end of this learning session, each student is required to choose one of the answer options along and their reasons. Then all students reviewed and discussed their option answers together to reflect and evaluate it.



Figure 3. Documentation of role playing based on ethical dilemma

2. Result of Research Data Analysis: Questionnaires and Interviews

Likert scale is a scale used in research to measure the perceptions, opinions, or attitudes of a person or group towards a situation, experience, or social phenomenon (Bahrun et al., 2018). Five points on a Likert scale are considered an interval scale. The mean is very significant: from 1-1.8 means strongly disagree, from 1.81-2.60 means agree: from 2.61-3.40 means neutral, from 3.41-4.20 means agree, from of 4.21 means strongly agree. In this study, the student learning experience consists of three aspects: understanding, applying, and reflecting, which are in ten questionnaire statements and twelve interview questions to find out in depth the student learning experience including aspects of understanding, applying, and reflecting after followed the ethical dilemma on role playing learning model.

The ten questionnaire statements (X) include with indicators of understanding aspects (X1) consisting of four statements (X1.1, X1.2, X1.3, and X1.4). Then three statements with indicators of applying aspects (X2) consisting of three statements (X2.1, X2.2, and X2.3). Furthermore, three statements with indicators of reflecting aspects (X3) consisting of three statements (X3.1, X3.2, and X3.3). Each question has an alternative answer which are strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The determination of the score in processing the Likert scale survey data results, which are SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, and SD=1. The results of the data obtained were then processed by descriptive statistics analysis using IBM SPSS software.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Analysis of Understanding Aspect

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
X1.1	25	3	5	3.96	0.676
X1.2	25	3	5	3.96	0.539
X1.3	25	3	5	3.88	0.526
X1.4	25	3	5	3.88	0.526
Valid N (listwise)	25			3.92	0.567

Table 1 is the result of data that has been obtained and processed by descriptive statistics analysis. Based on Table 1, there are four questions as indicators of understanding aspect. The research data is used to determine students' understanding after following the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. After conducting descriptive statistics analysis, the mean that obtained is 3.92. According to the Likert interval scale, from 3.41-4.20 means agree. Therefore, the results of descriptive statistics analysis show that students agree that ethical dilemmas in role playing play a role in providing understanding more easily, more deeply, and more interestingly.

The results of the descriptive statistics analysis are also supported by the result data from student interviews. The following are some of student interview results after following the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model, and student names are only written in initials.

Student HB: *"I got the role of the mayor; I think the ethical dilemma on the learning model is very helpful in understanding. Because I got a real picture of the conditions*

and situations by choosing an ethical dilemma and playing a role than only listening to the teacher explain because it makes me easily forget what the teacher teaches”.

Student MY: *“I played the role of the local government. The ethical dilemma in this role-playing learning model is very interesting, although I have previously done role-playing in class but this is the first time I have experienced an ethical dilemma. This experience was very interesting and made me understand better because I prefer practice over only listening in class. The ethical dilemma that I experienced also made me think that I had to have a deep understanding to be able to choose the best answer option for the ethical dilemma”.*

Student RN: *“My role in the ethical dilemma on the role-playing learning model is as a market trader. There was an impression and a special impact that I experienced, I easily understood after participating in the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. Because I think to be able to choose ethical dilemma options well, I must understand the material of learning well too”.*

After following the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model, students become easier to understand and more interested in understanding. Students' success in achieving understanding is highly dependent on the teacher's ability, where the teacher must be able to create concepts that strengthen meaningful knowledge (Hounsell, 1997). This result shows that ethical dilemma in role-playing learning model as a learning innovation has good potential in terms of improving students' understanding.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Analysis of Applying Aspect

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
X2.1	25	3	5	4,12	0.666
X2.2	25	3	5	3,68	0.690
X2.3	25	3	5	3,60	0.577
Valid N (listwise)	25			3.80	0.644

Based on Table 2, there are three questions that become indicators of the applying aspect. The research data is used to determine the applying of students after following the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. After conducting descriptive statistics analysis, the average value obtained is 3.80. According to the Likert interval scale, from 3.41-4.20 means agree. Therefore, the results of descriptive statistical analysis show that students agree that ethical dilemmas in role playing play a role in provide applying.

The results of student interviews also support the results of the descriptive statistics analysis. Here are some results of student interviews after following the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model.

Student ANF: *“My role is a community leader. I think the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model gives me a real example of how to apply what I have learned. This kind of thing helps me especially when expressing my opinion, training me to be more courageous to speak about what I know in front of many people.”*

Student AD: *“As a person who plays one of people town role, I learned a lot from the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. this activity opened my mind to act directly and more creatively in certain situations in an applicable manner. I find it difficult to make choices in ethical dilemmas, but this is an important lesson for me how something I learned at school can help me make choices in my life later.”*

Student SDS: *“I am a mall supporter on the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. I feel that this learning is like a fake reality that gives me the opportunity to practice in applying what I learn at school. This activity makes me feel more creative and opens my mind to various points of view of many people.”*

Improving students' ability to apply what they have learned is one of the meanings of learning (Awidi & Paynter, 2018; Paolini, 2015). The ethical dilemma in this role-playing learning model encourages the development of knowledge application. Students not only apply what they know, but also learn to identify environmental situations and adaptability in any



situations.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Analysis of Reflecting Aspect

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
X3.1	25	3	5	3.76	0.597
X3.2	25	3	5	3.60	0.577
X3.3	25	3	5	3.96	0.735
Valid N (listwise)	25			3.78	0.636

Based on [Table 3](#), there are three questions that become indicators of the reflecting aspect. The research data is used to determine students' reflection after following the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. After conducting descriptive statistical analysis, the mean is 3.78. According to the Likert interval scale, from 3.41-4.20 means agree. Then the results of descriptive statistics analysis show that students agree that ethical dilemmas in role playing play a role in helping students to reflecting.

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are also supported by data from student interviews conducted directly. The following are some of the results of student interviews after following the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model.

Student RR: *"I became the manager of a company that will build a mall in the ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. When discussing the options of the ethical dilemma and hearing my friends' answers, I felt like I was reflecting back on my answers. This discussion allowed me to re-evaluate whether my answer was right or wrong. I don't usually do this reflective discussion during learning."*

Student CF: *"I played the role of a public figure in an ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. This learning made me able to reflect on what I experienced during the role-playing. I had an example of deciding on an answer and reflecting on the consequences of the answer I chose."*

Student NCF: *"The role given to me is a market trader in an ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model. The reflective activity I experienced was when everyone explained the reasons for their ethical dilemma choices, making me rethink my choices and reasons. Ethical dilemmas make me understand better when making choices we should not be selfish and must think of others too."*

Reflection in learning can improve students' knowledge, abilities and skills ([Bosch et al., 2025](#); [Helyer, 2015](#); [Richardson & Maltby, 1995](#)). The ethical dilemma in the role-playing learning model has a special effect that can activate students' reflection because it requires students to explore their personal values in making choices. Students also have the opportunity to listen to the opinions of others for reflection. This reflection helps to integrate academic learning with students' personal identity development, making education more relevant and meaningful for their lives outside the classroom.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics Analysis of All Aspect

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Understanding aspect	25	13	20	15.68	1.520
Applying aspect	25	9	14	11.40	1.155
Reflecting aspect	25	10	13	11.32	1.069
Valid N (listwise)	25			3.83	0.615

From [Table 4](#), it can be seen that the mean is 3.83, which based on the Likert scale interval, the score value of 3.41 - 4.20 means agree. Therefore, it can be seen that students agree that ethical dilemmas in the role-playing model enhance students' learning experience. When students experience ethical dilemma scenarios and play roles that contain value conflicts, moral principles, and ethical consequences, they are not just memorizing theory, but experiencing firsthand the complex decision-making process. Ethical dilemmas integrated into role-playing make students have to critically analyze conflicting values, consider the short-term and long-term consequences of various choices of ethical dilemmas.

From the aspect of understanding, students who participate in role-playing of ethical dilemmas will experience a deeper concept internalization process than conventional learning.



When students “live” in a particular role and have to respond to the dilemma they are presented with, they are forced to actively process information, consider multiple points of view, and connect theoretical knowledge with practical context. This cognitive process goes far beyond simply recalling facts, as students must truly understand the complexity of the issue, the values involved, and the social and moral impact of each perspective in order to play the role effectively.

In the application aspect, ethical dilemmas in role-playing provide a space for students to implement the knowledge and values they have learned theoretically into situations that resemble real life. Students learn how to apply ethical principles, consider the consequences of various options, and make responsible decisions. This simulated pressure decision-making process trains students' ability to think quickly yet deeply, integrate multiple ethical considerations, and articulate the reasoning behind their decisions. This applied experience not only strengthens conceptual understanding but also builds practical skills that can be transferred to real-world situations.

The reflection aspect is the most valuable component of ethical dilemma-based learning in role playing. After the role-playing activity is completed, a structured reflective discussion allows students to evaluate the decisions that have been made, explore possible alternatives, and identify the moral principles underlying the various perspectives. These moments of reflection encourage students to revisit their assumptions, acknowledge biases that may have influenced their thinking, and deepen their understanding of the complexity of ethical issues in real life. Furthermore, collective reflection creates a learning community where students can learn from the experiences and insights of classmates, expand their thinking horizons, and develop tolerance for the moral ambiguity that often characterizes ethical dilemmas in real life.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Ethical dilemma in role playing learning model can improve students' learning experience. This learning innovation makes it easier for students to understand what is being taught. This is because when making choices in ethical dilemmas, students must have good knowledge in order to choose the best answer. In addition, this learning also provides a situation through an ethical dilemma scenario in role playing that gives students the opportunity to apply the knowledge they got. This is something that students do not find during conventional learning. In addition, students also have the preparation and knowledge of how to apply their knowledge in daily life. Then the discussion session of ethical dilemma answers by all students makes students able to reflect back on their answers by listening to each other's answers and reasons. The reflection that students do makes them able to evaluate their choices and plan what they should do if they are faced with a choice in their daily life. Student learning experience is one of the important things in learning. Every aspect of the learning experience can also show the quality of the learning. In an ever-evolving human civilization, education must also evolve. Educators must be able to make deep and meaningful learning innovations to improve students' learning experience.

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