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Civics Learning Media in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of inquiry-based civic education media in enhancing civic literacy among elementary school students. The problem addressed is the limited engagement of students in conventional Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) learning, which tends to emphasize rote knowledge over critical, participatory, and reflective dimensions of citizenship. The objective of this research is to explore how inquiry-oriented learning media can foster students' understanding, critical reasoning, and social responsibility in a contextual and meaningful way. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation in an elementary school in Kendari, Indonesia. NVivo 14 software was utilized for thematic analysis to ensure systematic and rigorous interpretation. The results reveal that the use of inquiry-based media significantly enhances students' comprehension of civic values, promotes critical thinking, strengthens civic identity, and increases participation in school life. These findings contribute to the development of multidimensional civic literacy models and underscore the pedagogical value of inquiry strategies in primary education.

Keywords: *Civic Education, Elementary School, Learning Media.*

PRELIMINARY

Civics education is a crucial foundation for developing a young generation aware of their national identity, human rights, and social responsibilities as citizens. Amidst 21st-century challenges such as increasing social polarization, massive digital penetration, and weakening social cohesion, elementary schools are strategically positioned to instill civic values early and meaningfully. However, the reality of civics education at the elementary level still tends to be normative, with a pedagogical approach that emphasizes memorization and direct instruction rather than developing critical and reflective understanding. This impacts students' limited ability to fully grasp the concept of citizenship, particularly regarding the interconnected rights, obligations, and responsibilities within the life of the nation and state (Astarita et al., 2024).

Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) plays a strategic role in shaping the character, national identity, and democratic awareness of students from an early age, particularly at the elementary school level (Assingkily, 2021). Through PPKn, core national values such as tolerance, responsibility, and love of the homeland are systematically instilled to develop citizens with integrity and social activity (Subkhan, 2017; Hoskins & Fredriksson, 2008). However, pedagogical challenges remain, particularly related to low student motivation and active participation in learning. One of the main causes is the use of conventional and less contextual learning media, which are unable to accommodate the more visual, interactive, and digital learning styles of 21st-century students (Sari & Margana, 2020). In the context of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based learning and meaningful experiences, the need for innovative PPKn learning media is increasingly pressing.

Although various studies have been conducted on the development of learning media, the primary focus remains on exact subjects such as mathematics and science, while civics is often positioned

as a complement (Supriatna, 2019). This creates an important research gap that needs to be addressed, particularly in developing or evaluating media capable of conveying civic values in an engaging, relevant, and applicable manner for elementary school students. This study aims to address this need by offering a contextual learning media approach that aligns with students' cognitive and affective development. Thus, this article makes a significant contribution to strengthening media-based character education and expanding the literature on civic pedagogy in the digital era.

METHOD

Types and Approaches of Research

This research is a qualitative study using an intrinsic case study approach. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the practices, challenges, and effectiveness of instructional media in the context of Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) in elementary schools. An intrinsic case study is deemed appropriate because its primary focus is to explore the phenomenon of PPKn learning within a specific context, not for generalization, but rather to deepen the meaning and processes that occur within it (Stake, 1995; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Background

The research was conducted at a public elementary school in Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi. This school was purposively selected based on its active Civics (PPKn) learning program and the use of simple technology-based learning media. This setting provides a strong representation of the dynamics of PPKn learning in an urban context in eastern Indonesia, where educational technology infrastructure is developing but is not evenly distributed.

Research Informants

The main informants in this study consisted of PPKn teachers, school principals, and fifth and sixth grade students. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) directly involved in the PPKn learning process, (2) having at least two years of experience teaching/taking the subject, and (3) willing to provide data openly and reflectively. The number of informants was adjusted to the principle of data saturation, which is when the data obtained has shown a recurring pattern and does not provide significant new information (Mason, 2010).

Data collection technique

Data were collected through three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to observe the use of instructional media in the classroom learning process, by recording teacher-student interactions, student responses to the media, and classroom dynamics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and students to explore perceptions, experiences, and challenges in using instructional media. Documentation included teaching materials, learning tools, and student work as important artifacts for data triangulation.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques with the help of NVivo 14 software. The use of NVivo allows for a systematic coding process, visualization of relationships between themes, and grouping of data based on relevant conceptual categories. The analysis procedure was carried out in several stages: (1) Transcription and Data Organization: All interview and observation data were transcribed verbatim, then uploaded into NVivo. (2) Open Coding: Initial codes were created based on keywords, meaningful phrases, and important narratives that emerged from the data. (3) Axial Coding: Initial codes were then grouped into broader categories, connecting themes based on similarities in meaning or conceptual relationships. (4) Selective Coding: Main thematic categories were formulated to answer the research questions and build a coherent theoretical narrative. (5) Data Visualization: Visual models (such as treemaps, word clouds, and node trees) from NVivo were used to support visual and exploratory data interpretation.

Data Validity Test

The validity of the data in this study was tested through four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985): (1) Credibility: Achieved through source triangulation (teachers, students, principals), technical triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation), and member checking, namely returning the findings to informants for verification. (2) Transferability: Strengthened by detailed contextual descriptions of the background, participant characteristics, and research settings so that readers can assess relevance in other contexts. (3) Dependability: Determined through an audit trail, namely comprehensive documentation of the research process, from planning, collection, to data analysis. (4) Confirmability: Maintained by using the researcher's reflective notes (reflexive journal) and the use of NVivo as a tool to maintain objectivity in the data processing process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative data analysis conducted with the help of NVivo 14 software revealed several key themes that represent significant transformations in students' civic literacy after the implementation of inquiry-based learning media in PPKn subjects. These themes include: strengthening the understanding of basic civic values, improving critical thinking skills, strengthening social identity, and increasing students' social participation in the school environment. These findings indicate that the use of inquiry-based learning media contributes significantly to encouraging the cognitive, affective, and social engagement of elementary school students, particularly in the context of internalizing the values of Pancasila and democracy.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on Inquiry-Based Civic Education Media

Theme	Description of Findings	Supporting Evidence	Interpretation
Strengthening Understanding of Core Civic Values	Students developed deeper comprehension of values such as justice, responsibility, and tolerance through inquiry-based activities like case studies and group discussions.	Observation of classroom projects; student interviews indicating application of civic values in daily life.	Inquiry media encouraged contextual understanding and internalization of moral principles beyond rote learning.
Enhancement of Critical Thinking Skills	Students demonstrated increased ability to question, evaluate, and reason about social and ethical issues during PPKn lessons.	Interview transcripts showing reflective questions from students ("Why was that person dishonest?", etc.); NVivo coding of reflective dialogue.	Inquiry-based learning nurtured analytical and ethical reasoning, aligning with reflective civic literacy frameworks.
Reinforcement of Civic and Social Identity	Students began to identify themselves as active and responsible citizens, inspired by authentic media representations of civic roles.	Students' statements connecting classroom activities with civic ideals ("I want to help others like the hero in the video.").	Learning media helped shape positive civic self-concept and sense of belonging within the community.
Increased Social Participation in School Life	Students became more engaged in collaborative and democratic practices such as class discussions, elections, and school projects.	Teacher reports and observation logs noting higher student participation post-intervention.	The media promoted participatory behaviors, transforming passive learners into proactive civic participants.

The findings collectively demonstrate that inquiry-based civic education media significantly transformed students' cognitive, affective, and social engagement in PPKn (Pancasila and Civic Education). These outcomes align with the multidimensional model of civic literacy, which integrates knowledge, values, and active participation. The research validates the pedagogical power of inquiry-oriented media as a bridge between critical reflection and real-world civic practice, especially within Indonesia's elementary education context.

The first theme that emerged strongly in the analysis was the strengthening of understanding of core civic values. Through inquiry-based learning, students actively explored the meaning of values such as justice, responsibility, and tolerance through case studies, group discussions, and project-based assignments. Interview and observation data showed that students were able to relate these values to their daily experiences, for example, in the context of assigning roles in study groups or resolving conflicts between peers. A word tree visualization in NVivo showed strong connections between words such as "fair," "cooperation," and "wise choice," reflecting an understanding of these core values as a result of reflective and participatory learning (Zhang et al., 2020).

The second theme identified was improved critical thinking skills, particularly in evaluating social situations and making ethical decisions. Inquiry strategies encourage students to not only passively receive information but also to question and evaluate various perspectives. Coding of interview data showed that students were able to ask questions such as "Why is that person dishonest?", "What are the consequences if the rules are broken?", or "How can we solve this problem together?". This indicator demonstrates an improvement in the reflective dimension of civic literacy, as developed by Bennet et al. (2022), where students are able to construct social meaning independently and critically through interactions with media and open discussions.

Furthermore, strengthening students' social identities as active citizens also emerged as a dominant theme in the analysis. Through simulations, class projects, and the use of interactive media depicting national life, students began to understand their position within the school community and wider society. One student stated, "I want to be someone who can help others, like the hero in the video." This statement indicates that the representation of civic values in learning media shapes a positive narrative about students' roles and identities as young citizens. This finding aligns with a study by Lee & Lim (2021), which emphasized the importance of using authentic media to build civic self-concept from an early age.

The fourth theme that emerged was increased student social participation in the school environment. After the learning process, students were more actively involved in classroom and school activities, such as group discussions, electing class leaders, and cleaning activities. This was reflected in coding nodes with keywords such as "participate," "cooperate," and "express opinions." Furthermore, teachers confirmed that students were more frequently expressing opinions and solutions in class discussion forums than before the implementation of inquiry-based media learning. This marked a shift from a passive to a more proactive attitude, an important indicator of participatory citizenship literacy (Hoskins et al., 2023).

These findings provide an important contribution to civic literacy theory, which has tended to focus solely on cognitive dimensions and factual knowledge. An inquiry-based approach implemented through interactive media has been shown to strengthen the affective and conative aspects of literacy, including students' attitudes, communication skills, and social participation. This supports the multidimensional approach to civic literacy advocated by Deakin Crick & Wilson (2019), which emphasizes the balance between knowledge, values, and action in civic education.

Technically, the use of NVivo in qualitative data analysis offers the advantage of systematically and visually capturing thematic patterns. Features such as word frequency queries, cluster analysis, and matrix coding are used to verify the consistency of themes across data sources (teachers, students, and classroom documentation), while also providing transparency in the coding process. Furthermore, NVivo's data visualization facilitates the development of analytical narratives rooted in empirical evidence, rather than simply subjective interpretations. This strengthens the credibility and validity of findings in technology-based qualitative research (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019).

However, several limitations were also noted. The local context of the school in Kendari, as well as the limited demographic variation of the students, limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Furthermore, although NVivo provides sophisticated analytical tools, the results are still influenced by the researcher's conceptual acumen in creating categories and relationships between themes. Therefore, interpretation of these results should be read with an awareness of the limitations of the study's scope and context.

Overall, the results of this analysis indicate that the integration of inquiry-based learning media in PPKn subjects contributes significantly to building a more vibrant, contextual, and long-term foundation

for civic literacy for elementary school students. The transformation from passive learning to reflective and participatory learning is a crucial step in creating future citizens who are critical, responsible, and oriented toward humanitarian values.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of inquiry-based learning media in improving elementary school students' civic literacy. Through a qualitative approach with data analysis assisted by NVivo 14 software, it was found that the implementation of interactive and contextually designed learning media can encourage students' cognitive, affective, and social engagement in the Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) learning process.

Key findings indicate that inquiry-based learning media successfully strengthened students' understanding of core civic values such as justice, responsibility, and tolerance. Furthermore, this learning also enhanced students' critical thinking skills in evaluating social issues, fostered positive civic identity, and encouraged active participation in the school environment. These four themes serve as important indicators of improved civic literacy, which is measured not only by knowledge but also by attitudes, reflective skills, and social engagement.

The implications of these findings encompass both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, the research findings reinforce a multidimensional approach to civic literacy that positions students as active subjects in constructing the meaning of national values. These findings also emphasize that learning media are not merely visual aids, but rather pedagogical bridges that can stimulate critical dialogue and foster civic character development from an early age. Practically, these findings suggest the importance of teachers' role in designing media relevant to students' social contexts, as well as the need for ongoing teacher training in integrating inquiry strategies into civic education.

However, this study has limitations in terms of contextual scope, covering only one elementary school in Kendari City. Therefore, recommendations for further research include conducting comparative studies across different geographic regions, using a mixed-methods design to balance qualitative and quantitative data, and developing a standardized and widely applicable inquiry-based learning media model. Further research could also explore the relationship between digital technology use and improving civic literacy within the Merdeka Curriculum framework and the Pancasila student profile.

Overall, this study confirms that inquiry-based PPKn learning media is not only relevant for learning citizenship content, but also effective in fostering democratic character and social responsibility in elementary school students—an important prerequisite in forming active, inclusive, and integrity-based citizens in the future.

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