



OPTIMIZATION OF IPS LEARNING IN CHARACTER FORMATION OF GRADE V STUDENTS AT MIS HIDAYATUSSALAM

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to maximize the use of Social Studies (IPS) education in order to improve the character development of fifth grade students at the Hidayatussalam Private Elementary School. Using a qualitative approach, this study was conducted through observation, document analysis, and in-depth interviews to understand the teacher's perspective and the teaching methods used. The main focus of this study is how IPS education can be integrated with values such as tolerance, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect for others. This study was conducted at the Hidayatussalam Private Elementary School, an Islamic educational institution with a focus on character education. The results of the study indicate that teachers play a central role as role models and facilitators in the formation of student character. Project-based learning methods and group discussions have proven effective in instilling character values. In addition, the selection of relevant teaching materials, the insertion of inspirational stories, and in-depth reflection during the learning process help students understand and internalize positive values. This study shows that optimizing IPS learning through integrative strategies can support the formation of student character holistically. This finding provides an important contribution to the development of learning methods that are not only oriented towards academics, but also towards strengthening students' character.

Keywords: Optimization; Social Studies Learning; Student Character

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INTRODUCTION

Character education is an important component in the Indonesian education curriculum, especially at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) level. The goal of character education is to instill moral and ethical values that support the growth and positive behavior of students. Character education is believed to be able to produce a generation that is not only intelligent but also has a noble attitude, is responsible, and cares about others and the surrounding environment. At the MI level, character education has a very high role because it is the foundation for the formation of children's personalities in the Early Childhood community (Armini, 2024). In the context of Indonesian education, character is an element that is not directly related to the development of students' cognitive abilities. This is in line with the Merdeka curriculum which emphasizes the importance of holistic education, namely education that does not only focus on academic subjects, but also on developing

strong character so that students can become members of society who are moral, honest, and have noble character.

One of the subjects that is very relevant in supporting the formation of positive character in MI is Social Sciences (IPS). This subject teaches students about social interactions, culture, history, geography, and economics (Putera et al., 2023). Through IPS, students can be invited to understand the importance of human, social, and cultural values that can be applied in everyday life (Damanik, 2020). This article aims to analyze how IPS learning can be optimized to improve students' positive character at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam, a school that is highly committed to developing student character through a holistic approach.

Character education in this context refers to the process of instilling moral and ethical values related to positive attitudes and behaviors. Lickona in his book entitled *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* identifies five main values in character education, namely honesty, responsibility, respect, discipline, and social concern. These five values are the basis for developing students' character, which will influence their attitudes and behaviors in the future (Dalmeri, 2014). On the other hand, Social Sciences (IPS) as one of the subjects in MI has a very important position. IPS teaches students about human relationships in various aspects of life, both in terms of social, cultural, political, and economic (Aulia & Wandini, 2023). Through IPS learning, students are expected to develop positive social attitudes, such as empathy for others, a sense of responsibility towards society, and an attitude of mutual respect and tolerance (Sari et al., 2024).

According to Widodo (2011), social studies learning in elementary schools has a very large role in developing students' critical and creative thinking skills. This is closely related to student character, because critical and creative thinking will encourage students to become individuals who are able to make decisions wisely, responsibly, and care about the common interest (Jaya, 2021). As an Islamic educational institution, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam has a strong commitment to developing students' character through integrative teaching methods. Social Sciences (IPS) is one of the subjects that has the greatest potential to develop character. IPS education not only teaches basic concepts about society, the environment, and the world, but also includes moral, social, and cultural values that can help students develop their character. In other words, IPS is an important tool for identifying values such as cohesion, tolerance, and responsibility.

However, the challenges in character building of students through social studies learning are not simple. The external environment, such as social media and the influence of popular culture, often contradict the positive values taught in schools. In addition, the lack of contextual and interactive learning strategies often makes it difficult for students to understand and internalize the character values taught. Therefore, optimizing social studies learning becomes an urgent need to bridge the gap between the theory taught in class and its application in real life. This optimization encourages the use of innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning and group discussions, which allow students to actively participate in the learning process (Durrotunnisa & Nur, 2020). Through this method, students not only learn about social studies concepts but also practice character values in real contexts. In addition, the selection of relevant teaching materials, the insertion of inspirational stories, and behavioral reflection are important components in creating meaningful learning experiences.

This study focused on fifth grade students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam to explore how social studies learning can be optimized in shaping their character. Fifth grade students were chosen because they are in a critical stage of development, where they begin to build the foundation of social and moral values that will

influence their lives in the future. By utilizing a qualitative approach, this study aims to identify the role of teachers, learning methods, and supporting and inhibiting factors in character building through social studies learning.

It is expected that the results of this study will provide a significant contribution to the development of social studies learning strategies that do not only emphasize academic aspects but also holistically on the development of student character. Thus, social studies education can be one of the most important means of producing a generation that is moral, characterful, and competitive, and able to adapt to the outside world without violating the moral and constructive principles taught in Islam.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type (Sugiyono, 2024). This approach was chosen because it aims to explore in-depth information on how social studies learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam can be optimized to improve students' positive character. The qualitative approach allows researchers to collect rich and in-depth data on learning practices that occur in the field. Data Collection Techniques used in this study include in-depth interviews and direct observation (Margono, 2010). Interviews were conducted with various relevant participants, namely three social studies teachers, one principal, and ten students from various classes. Interviews were conducted with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of their views and experiences related to social studies learning and the implementation of character education in schools. In addition to interviews, direct observation was also conducted in social studies classes to see the learning practices that took place and how character values were applied in the process. Participants involved in this study involved identifying individuals who were considered to have knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic. Therefore, participants in this study included social studies teachers with more than five years of teaching experience, principals with a vision and commitment to character education, and active students who participated in social studies learning. Data Analysis Procedure Data analysis was conducted using the theme analysis approach, which is one of the analysis methods used in qualitative research. Data obtained from observations and interviews were analyzed to identify key themes related to social studies teaching methods that can help students develop positive characters. The data were then categorized and analyzed to provide deeper insight into the ongoing learning process at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

The Role of Teachers in Character Formation of Grade V Students

Teachers have a strategic approach to developing students' characters, especially in the context of basic education such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. As a teacher, teachers not only play a role as teachers of science, but also as primary teachers in learning morality and ethics. Strong characters such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and tolerance are essential to overcome the challenges of contemporary life (Wardani, 2010). In this era of globalization, the challenges in character formation are increasing with the influence of foreign culture and technology that are not always in line with local and religious values

(Mulyani, 2012). Therefore, the role of teachers is increasingly important in guiding students to be able to internalize positive values and form a strong personality.

Teachers not only play a role through teaching methods in the classroom, but also through daily interactions with students (Sopian, 2016). By being a real example in attitude and behavior, teachers are able to inspire students to imitate and apply these values in their lives. This introduction provides a foundation for understanding the importance of the role of teachers as character builders of a young generation with noble and responsible morals.

Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Yazid Muzakki as a grade 5 teacher regarding the role in forming student character, he said that:

"As a teacher, I act as a role model and facilitator, not only delivering academic material but also instilling positive values through examples, advice, and daily habits in the classroom".

Then Mr. Yazid added regarding the character values that must be instilled in students:

"The core values include honesty, responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, and respect for others, which are in line with Islamic teachings. These values shape students' personalities by instilling integrity, awareness of obligations, ability to work together, respect for differences, and fair treatment of others, thus supporting the creation of a harmonious and moral society".

The interview results show that teachers play a dual role in the educational process, namely as role models and facilitators. As role models, teachers become role models who provide real examples in attitudes, behaviors, and ways of interacting, so that students can learn from what they see and experience every day. Meanwhile, as facilitators, teachers function to create a conducive learning environment, where positive values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and discipline can be instilled in an integrated manner with the learning process.

The instillation of these values is done through a direct approach, such as giving relevant advice, or indirectly, such as through daily habits applied in class. In this way, students not only gain academic knowledge, but also hone their emotional and social abilities, which play an important role in the formation of their positive character.

Based on the interview results regarding the biggest challenges for teachers in forming student character, Mr. Yazid as a teacher stated that:

"The biggest challenge is the influence of the outside school environment, such as social media and the home environment, which are not always in line with the values taught in school. Social media often exposes students to negative content, while a less conducive home environment can hinder the process of internalizing positive values instilled by teachers, so it requires a collaborative approach to overcome it".

The interview results showed that one of the biggest challenges in shaping students' character is the influence of the environment outside the school, such as social media and the home environment, which do not always support the values taught in schools. Social media, for example, is often a source of uncontrolled information, which can influence students' mindsets and behavior. Negative content, such as hate speech, a consumerist lifestyle, or impolite behavior, can damage the process of instilling positive values carried out by teachers in schools.

In addition, the home environment also plays an important role in the success of character formation of students. Not all students have a family environment that supports the learning of moral and ethical values. Some may face a lack of attention from parents, family conflict, or inconsistent parenting. This can create a gap between what students learn in school and what they experience at home, making it difficult to internalize these values.

The combination of social media influence and less conducive home environment is a challenge that must be faced by teachers and schools. To overcome this, close collaboration is needed between teachers, parents, and the surrounding community in creating an environment that supports the formation of student character. Efforts such as socialization about the wise use of social media and the involvement of parents in the character education process are important steps to bridge this gap.

Social Studies Learning Methods in Developing the Character of Class V Students

Learning methods play an important role in supporting the development of student character, especially at the elementary education level such as in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. In the context of character education, education not only aims to improve students' academic achievement but also instill positive values that support their personal growth. Values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and tolerance can be built through a methodical approach to education.

Various teaching methods, such as project-based learning, group discussions, and simulations, allow students not only to understand academic materials but also to apply them in everyday life (Baro'ah, 2020). By actively involving students in the learning process, teachers can create relevant and meaningful learning situations, so that students can feel the direct benefits of the values taught.

Character development through appropriate learning methods also requires integrated and consistent planning (Okpatrioka, 2023). Teachers must be able to adapt learning approaches that are appropriate to students' needs, local culture, and the challenges of the modern era. Thus, learning methods that encourage character development are not only educational tools, but also a means of transforming students into individuals with strong character and ready to face future challenges.

In the effective learning method to develop student character, Mr. Yazid stated that:

“Project-based methods and group discussions, because students learn to work together, be responsible, and respect the opinions of others. In addition, this method encourages students to think critically, solve problems creatively, and understand the importance of each individual's role in achieving common goals”.

Then, in an effort to integrate character values into learning methods, Mr. Yazid also said that:

"By selecting relevant teaching materials, inserting inspirational stories, and conducting reflections or evaluations related to student behavior during the learning process. This approach helps students understand positive values contextually, while strengthening the relationship between the concepts taught and real applications in everyday life”.

To determine the benchmark for the success of learning methods in developing student character, Mr. Yazid stated that:

"Through observation of student behavior, peer feedback, and reflective discussions about the lessons they learned from the activity. In addition, evaluation is also carried out by looking at student involvement in group activities, consistency in implementing positive values, and their responses to the challenges given".

The interview results revealed that project-based learning methods and group discussions play an important role in developing students' characters. Through this approach, students are invited to work together to complete tasks, which teaches them the importance of collaboration and helping each other. In addition, individual and group responsibility is the main focus, where each student is given a specific role that must be carried out well. Group discussions allow students to learn to respect the opinions of others, even though they have different views, so that the values of tolerance and respect for differences can be practiced.

The selection of relevant teaching materials is one of the keys to the success of this method. The materials chosen are adjusted to the context of students' lives, so that they can more easily understand and apply positive values in everyday life. Teachers also use inspirational stories as a tool to convey moral messages indirectly. These stories provide a real picture of values such as honesty, cooperation, and responsibility, which can inspire students to apply them in various situations. The learning process is complemented by planned reflection and evaluation to ensure that students not only understand the values, but are also able to internalize them. Teachers observe student behavior during the learning process to see to what extent they apply the positive values taught. Peer feedback is also used to gain additional perspectives on student attitudes and behavior, especially in the context of group work.

Reflective discussions are an integral part of the evaluation, where students are invited to reflect on the lessons they have learned from the learning activities. In these discussions, students can share experiences, realize mistakes, and learn to improve their attitudes. Teachers also encourage students to evaluate how values such as cooperation and responsibility have been applied in group assignments, so that this reflection becomes a deep and meaningful learning experience. In addition, the evaluation of the success of this method is carried out by looking at the extent to which students are actively involved in group activities, their consistency in implementing positive values, and their responses to challenges given during learning. Through this approach, teachers not only assess students' academic aspects, but also monitor their character development holistically. This method proves that well-designed learning can have a significant impact on students' character development in formal educational environments.

Discussion

The formation of student character is one of the main goals of education, especially at the elementary level such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Teachers have a central role in realizing learning that focuses not only on academic skills but also on the development of student character. Based on the description above, it can be said that teachers and teaching methods have a significant influence on the development of student character, especially in the Social Sciences (IPS) curriculum, which is in line with moral and social values.

Teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam function as role models and facilitators in the learning process. As role models, teachers not only deliver teaching materials but also provide real examples through attitudes, behaviors, and daily

interactions. The interviewed teachers emphasized that their presence as role models is very important in building positive values such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation. Teachers also act as facilitators who create a conducive learning environment for instilling character values (Sundari, 2017). Through interactions with students, teachers help students understand the importance of values such as tolerance and respect for others. In grade V, for example, students are invited to engage in discussions that promote respect for different opinions, so that they can develop an inclusive attitude.

However, teachers also face major challenges in shaping students' characters. The influence of the environment outside the school, such as social media and the home environment, is often not in line with the values taught in schools. To overcome this challenge, teachers try to establish communication with parents and provide students with an understanding of the negative impacts of these external influences. At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam, teachers use various teaching methods that encourage students to be more involved and active in the learning process. One of the methods used is problem-based learning, which encourages students to identify social problems and find collaborative solutions. Students work in groups to discuss social problems and provide solutions based on their understanding of the social studies material in problem-based learning.

Another method used is case studies, where students are given case studies that are relevant to social life, such as cases of social injustice or natural disasters. Through this case analysis, students are invited to think critically and formulate attitudes or actions that are in accordance with the desired character values, such as honesty, responsibility, and concern for others (Ahsanulhaq, 2019). One of the most important aspects of the interview is the use of project-based learning methods and group discussions. This method works well because it encourages teamwork, respect for others, and helps them work together. Through projects that are relevant to everyday life, students not only learn social studies concepts but also gain positive values during the process.

Group discussions provide students with the opportunity to clarify concepts and reduce the impact of their ideas. This process helps students develop critical thinking skills while practicing the values of tolerance and cooperation. Teachers also use relevant and contextual teaching materials to make it easier for students to understand the relationship between character values and social studies learning. The central role of teachers in the formation of student character through social studies learning. Social studies teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam not only act as presenters of learning materials, but also as role models and mentors who direct students to practice character values in everyday life. In an interview, one of the social studies teachers explained that in addition to teaching knowledge about history, geography, and economics, he also tries to instill character values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. This is done by providing real examples in everyday life and linking learning materials to moral values.

For example, in history lessons, teachers associate heroic values with the importance of courage and determination in facing challenges. On the other hand, in geography lessons, teachers teach the importance of respecting cultural and environmental diversity, and invite students to care more about current environmental issues. Thus, teachers not only teach cognitive knowledge, but also guide students to develop positive social attitudes. In addition, the insertion of inspirational stories is an important strategy in learning. These stories are used to indirectly instill values such as honesty and responsibility. For example, when discussing the topic of history, teachers tell stories of figures who have high integrity, so that students are inspired to imitate these attitudes. To ensure the success of learning in shaping students' characters, teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Hidayatussalam conduct structured evaluations. Evaluations are carried out through observation of student

behavior, feedback from peers, and reflective discussions. Observations help teachers understand the extent to which students have internalized positive values in everyday life.

Peer feedback provides additional perspectives on how students interact in groups and how they practice values such as cooperation and respect for differences. Reflective discussions, on the other hand, are effective tools for encouraging students to reflect on their experiences during the learning process. In these discussions, students are invited to share what they learned from group activities or projects, as well as how character values can be better applied in the future. In addition, teachers also monitor students' engagement in group activities, consistency in implementing positive values, and their responses to challenges given. This approach ensures that social studies learning not only produces academic achievement but also supports the holistic development of students' character.

Optimizing social studies learning to shape students' character in grade V involves integrating character values into every aspect of learning. Teachers do not only focus on delivering material, but also ensure that every learning activity supports character development. For example, project assignments are designed to promote cooperation and responsibility, while group discussions are directed at increasing tolerance and respect for others. Providing relevant and meaningful teaching materials is also an important factor in this optimization. Teachers ensure that social studies materials cover social issues that can raise students' awareness of the importance of values such as justice and diversity. Inspirational stories and deep reflections help students understand how these values can be applied in their lives.

Optimization also involves collaboration with parents and the school community. Teachers try to involve parents in the process of character building for students, for example through regular communication about student development and their involvement in school activities. In this way, character building for students is not only the responsibility of the school but is also supported by the home environment.

CONCLUSION

The role of teachers and learning methods are key elements in optimizing social studies learning to improve student character formation. Teachers at the Hidayatussalam Private Elementary School act as role models and facilitators who not only teach academic materials but also instill positive values through examples and innovative learning strategies. Project-based methods, group discussions, and the insertion of inspirational stories and reflections are effective approaches to encourage students to internalize character values. Despite facing challenges from the influence of the environment outside the school, teachers try to overcome them through communication with parents and structured evaluations. By involving all stakeholders and using relevant learning methods, social studies learning can be optimized to form students who are not only academically intelligent but also have strong and moral characters. Thus, social studies learning is not only an educational instrument, but also a transformation tool for students to become better individuals and ready to face the challenges of life.

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