

The Application of *Problem-Based Learning* Model as an Effective Solution in Social Studies Learning in Elementary Schools

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Abstract: *The main objective of this study is to present a conceptual study on the application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model as an innovative strategy to improve student learning outcomes in Social Studies (IPS). The Problem Based Learning (PBL) model is designed to hone students' critical thinking, analytical, creative, and collaborative skills in the process of solving problems oriented towards real-life situations, which in turn can encourage an increase in students' academic achievement. This study uses a library research approach by referring to various literature sources, scientific journals, and previous research results relevant to the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model. The results of the research findings show that the application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model is effective in improving student learning outcomes in social studies. This model is implemented through group discussions and problem solving activities that are relevant to the daily lives of students, thereby stimulating active thinking and problem-solving skills. The findings in this study are expected to make a significant contribution, both theoretically and practically, to educators, researchers, and policymakers in developing more creative, participatory, and relevant learning strategies, as well as serving as a reference for other researchers who wish to develop similar research in the context of education.*

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Introduction

Education is a conscious process aimed at improving human quality, marked by a shift from ignorance to understanding. This process runs parallel to individual development and involves various aspects of life that are developed through learning activities. To achieve optimal learning outcomes, the learning process must be adjusted to create a conducive atmosphere. Over time, the education system has continued to undergo changes in response to the dynamics of society's needs and expectations. (Dwi Suryani et al., 2023; Zurqoni et al., 2018) .

In the Indonesian context, Social Studies (IPS) plays a strategic role because it supports the nation's development towards a just, advanced, and prosperous life. Social Studies learning at the elementary school level is the initial stage of formal socialization, providing great benefits to students through materials that are appropriate for their development. SOC education not only develops intellectual abilities but also social skills,

such as the ability to seek and process information and work together in diverse groups. These skills are important to equip students to be able to play an active role as citizens in the era of global .

One relevant approach to achieving this goal is Problem-Based Learning, which is now increasingly popular among educators. This model encourages students' creativity and innovation by presenting real-life problems encountered in everyday life. Problem-Based Learning provides opportunities for students to think critically and find solutions independently, while still adhering to the curriculum and learning objectives (Daniel Afandi et al., 2024; Yunaeni & Setiani, 2025) .

Problem-Based Learning is an innovative learning approach that emphasizes the active involvement of students in solving problems relevant to real life (Daniel Afandi et al., 2024) . Problem-Based Learning places students as the main subjects in the learning process and is oriented towards developing critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills. The use of learning media in the implementation of Problem-Based Learning is an effective strategy to increase student participation and motivation to learn.

The Problem-Based Learning approach is in line with the characteristics of social studies learning in elementary schools, which is integrated and adapted to the concrete cognitive development stage of students. Therefore, the use of media and visual aids is very important to help students understand the material being presented (Wardati Khusniyah & Chaeroh, 2025) .

According to Hamalik, learning outcomes are changes that can be observed and measured, both in terms of increased knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Sahabuddin, 2015) . Learning outcomes are not just numbers or scores, but reflect positive transformations in various dimensions of student abilities.

However, in practice, social studies learning in elementary schools often still uses conventional teacher-centered methods, which make students less interested and inactive during learning. Suryani, (2019) To overcome this problem, an innovative learning model such as PBL is needed, which places students as the main subjects of learning. Through this approach, students are encouraged to think analytically and work together to solve problems relevant to their lives (Arends, 2021) .

The urgency of this research lies in the need to shift from traditional teaching methods to a more innovative, learner-centered approach that is relevant to real-life contexts, which not only improves academic achievement but also develops essential life skills for learners. The purpose of this study is to explore and strengthen the application of the Problem-Based Learning model in Social Studies learning.

The Problem-Based Learning model not only fosters curiosity but also trains students to understand the material in depth through meaningful learning experiences. In the context of social studies learning in elementary schools, the application of this model can help students relate social concepts to real life, improve social skills, and strengthen their understanding of the concepts taught (Trianto, 2021) . Therefore, the application of the Problem-Based Learning model combined with game media not only encourages active

learning but also supports the achievement of comprehensive and quality learning outcomes (Maulana et al., 2023) .

Method

This study used a literature review method, which involves examining various scientific articles, national and international journals, theses, and books relevant to the topic of Problem-Based Learning in social studies education at elementary schools (Sugiyono, 2015, 2020) . The literature review method, also known as a bibliographic study, is a technique for collecting data and information by examining written sources such as scientific journals, reference books, encyclopedias, and other reliable sources, both in written and digital formats, that are relevant and related to the object being studied (Nazir, 2015) . Data analysis techniques were carried out by grouping research results based on themes, the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning model, and its impact on social studies learning. This is in accordance with Sidiq,(2019) , which states that data analysis techniques were carried out by collecting data, identifying data, describing data, clearly presenting literature, and summarizing data, based on all data obtained related to the Application of the Problem-Based Learning Model as an Effective Solution in Social Studies Learning in Elementary Schools.

Results and Discussion

Various studies on the application of Problem-Based Learning in social studies subjects in elementary schools show very positive results. Based on a literature review of 15 scientific articles, Melindawati et al., (2022) states that Problem-Based Learning not only improves students' learning achievements but also increases their active participation in the learning process and develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This finding is reinforced by a meta-analysis by Ariyani & Kristin, (2021) , which covers 16 journals and 4 theses, showing an average increase in students' social studies learning achievement of up to 30%.

Hartati & Sholihin (2015) conducted research on the effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning in science education among 50 seventh-grade students at a public junior high school in North Lampung Regency. Their study results indicate that the use of the Problem-Based Learning model significantly improves students' critical thinking skills. In practice, the application of Problem Based Learning in social studies learning has also been tested through field research. One such study was conducted by Thesalonika & Sijabat, (2024) on fourth-grade students at SD N 040457 Berastagi, which showed an increase in the average score of students from 80.07 to 88.03 after the implementation of the Problem Based Learning model. This study confirms that Problem-Based Learning not only enhances students' cognitive achievements but also their engagement in the learning process. Similar findings were found in classroom action research at SD Negeri 28 Padang Sarai, where there was an increase in the average score from 70.19 in the pre-cycle to 82.28 in the second cycle, as well as an increase in learning completeness from 34% to 96.88%.

The Problem-Based Learning model also has a positive influence on the affective aspects of students. Research by Nurul Fauziyah, (2016) confirms that Problem-Based

Learning can build students' critical and collaborative thinking skills through problem-solving activities that require group work. Additionally, the action research conducted by shows that students' learning motivation increased by 22.5% after using the Problem-Based Learning model, while teachers' motivation increased by 18%.

Diah Pratiwi et al., (2024) in the proceedings of a national seminar, researched the application of the Problem-Based Learning model on the learning interest of fourth-grade students in social studies at elementary school. Based on the results of a literature review, the application of the Problem-Based Learning model has been proven to increase student participation and enthusiasm, develop critical thinking skills, and create a collaborative and dynamic learning atmosphere. The results of this study indicate that Problem-Based Learning not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also strengthens learning motivation and social interaction among students in the learning process. Meanwhile, Agus et al. (2022) conducted classroom action research (CAR) using the Kemmis and McTaggart model at SD Negeri 1 Katilombu. The results of the study showed a significant increase in the social studies learning outcomes of fourth-grade students, with an average score increasing from 54.7 in the pre-cycle stage to 62 in cycle I and reaching 72.55 in cycle II, as well as a learning completion rate of 80%. These findings confirm that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning model is effective in improving students' understanding of social studies material at the elementary school level.

Another study conducted by Wardati Khusniyah & Chaeroh, (2025) through a comprehensive literature review found that various obstacles in social studies learning, such as the use of non-integrative methods and low student interest in learning, can be minimized through the application of the Problem Based Learning model. The study shows that Problem-Based Learning encourages social studies learning that is more integrated, contextual, and relevant to the real experiences of students. Thus, choosing the right learning strategy is a key factor in achieving the learning objectives expected by teachers and students. The findings from a number of these studies were then analyzed and linked to relevant educational theories. This evaluation aims to assess the suitability of the strategies applied by teachers, while confirming that the systematic application of the Problem-Based Learning model in accordance with its syntax can optimally improve student learning outcomes. Ariyani & Kristin, (2021); Melindawati et al., (2022) show that the use of Problem-Based Learning can significantly improve students' social studies learning outcomes. In fact, in some studies, the average learning outcomes increased by more than 20% after the implementation of this model.

Based on the above studies, it is evident that the use of Problem-Based Learning can significantly improve students' social studies learning outcomes. In fact, in some studies, the average learning outcomes increased by more than 20% after the implementation of this model. The Problem-Based Learning model has proven to be one of the most effective approaches in improving the quality of social studies learning at the elementary school level. Various studies show that Problem-Based Learning is not only able to improve cognitive learning outcomes but also encourages students' active involvement in the learning process. In social studies learning, which is often rote and lacks context, the Problem-Based Learning approach provides a more meaningful alternative. Students are invited to understand the material through real problems that are close to their lives. This is in line with

the characteristics of Problem Based Learning, which emphasizes collaborative problem solving and the use of critical and creative thinking skills.

The Problem-Based Learning model is an innovative learning approach that emphasizes the active involvement of students in solving problems relevant to real life (Daniel Afandi et al., 2024). Problem-Based Learning places students as the main subjects in the learning process and is oriented towards developing critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills. Thus, it can be concluded that the Problem-Based Learning model can help create an interactive learning atmosphere because all activities involve teachers and students. It also increases students' self-confidence, improves their thinking patterns, and trains them to build new knowledge to solve problems related to the real or factual world.

In the Problem-Based Learning model, there are syntaxes that can support the success of the model, Vera et al., (2019) including: 1) Presentation of problems to be solved by students. 2) Organizing student learning. 3) Guiding students in each process of conducting experiments. 4) Developing works in the form of videos or reports. 5) Analyzing and evaluating the learning process. This is in line with Dayeni et al., (2017) in Yunitasari & Asri Hardini, (2021) the Problem-Based Learning model has 5 stages, namely: 1) Orientation of the students' problems, in which the teacher's role is to encourage students to ask questions related to the predetermined material or topic. 2) Students will be organized to learn, meaning that the teacher will help students define or organize their learning tasks. 3) The teacher guides students in searching for or collecting information themselves, which is obtained through experience. 4) Students present their work or the work they have created, then the problems are analyzed and evaluated through reflection by the teacher.

Problem-Based Learning does not only refer to learning outcomes but has also been proven effective in shaping students' attitudes and social skills. In the study " ", the application of Problem-Based Learning not only increases students' average scores but also increases their activity and motivation to learn. Affective aspects and cooperation skills are important components developed through this model. Problem-Based Learning requires teachers to act as learning facilitators who must be able to design appropriate problem scenarios, guide discussions, and provide appropriate feedback. This shows that although Problem-Based Learning has many benefits, its implementation requires teacher readiness and support from the school. This change creates a more dynamic and interactive classroom atmosphere, which in turn can increase student motivation to learn. The success of Problem-Based Learning in social studies learning is greatly influenced by the teacher's mastery of the model and careful planning (Ketut Suarni, 2017). If this model is carried out consistently and structurally, it can increase student enthusiasm, encourage them to be more active in expressing their opinions, and engage in problem-solving tasks.

The use of appropriate learning strategies will lead to the achievement of learning objectives expected by both teachers and students. The findings in this study were then analyzed and aligned with relevant theoretical foundations. The focus of this study is to evaluate whether the learning strategies applied by teachers are appropriate and to prove that the Problem-Based Learning model can improve student learning outcomes when applied in accordance with the stages or syntax of Problem-Based Learning. In addition to improving understanding of social studies concepts, the application of Problem-Based Learning also contributes to the character building of students, such as curiosity, social empathy, and responsibility. This is because in Problem Based Learning, students are faced

with real problems that require them to think deeply, discuss openly, and work in groups. These conditions create a learning space that not only emphasizes knowledge but also the social values that are at the core of social studies. Thus, Problem Based Learning is in line with the objectives of social studies learning in elementary school, namely to shape active, critical citizens who care about their environment.

Conclusion

Based on the results of analysis of various relevant studies and literature sources, it can be concluded that the Problem Based Learning model is an effective approach to improving the quality of social studies learning at the elementary school level. Problem Based Learning has succeeded in shifting the orientation of learning from teacher-centered to student-centered, thereby increasing student participation in the learning process. This active involvement is crucial in social studies learning, given that the materials taught are closely related to everyday realities that require contextual understanding.

The application of the Problem-Based Learning model has also been proven to improve students' overall learning outcomes, including in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Through this approach, students not only understand concepts theoretically, but are also able to apply them in relevant situations. Problem-Based Learning also encourages students to think critically, work together, and build strong communication and argumentation skills. This is in line with the demands of 21st century learning, which emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking skills and social literacy.

On the other hand, the application of the Problem-Based Learning model in social studies learning in elementary schools also presents its own challenges, especially for teachers. Teachers need to have the competence to design problem scenarios that are appropriate for the developmental level of students, as well as be able to effectively guide the discussion and problem-solving process. Therefore, the successful implementation of PBL requires the support of teacher training and the readiness of learning facilities and infrastructure.

Overall, the Problem-Based Learning model can be used as a solution-oriented and effective alternative approach to social studies learning in elementary schools. It is hoped that in the future, schools will be more open to implementing the Problem-Based Learning model as their main learning strategy, especially in shaping a generation that thinks critically, is able to solve problems, and has a good understanding of social issues.

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