

Social Studies Learning Strategies to Develop Character Values in Elementary School Students

Fiora Ade Hikmah¹, Adellia Via Ivanka², Frisika Hersilita³, Via Haiyun Karimah⁴, Baryanto⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: baryanto@iaincurup.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to identify the concept of learning strategies and analyze how the implementation of Social Studies learning strategies can develop character values in elementary school students. The main focus of this research is to determine the relationship between the learning strategies used by teachers and the effectiveness of character reinforcement, including responsibility, discipline, tolerance, cooperation, and social care. This research employs a qualitative method with a literature study approach. Data were collected through an in-depth review of various national and international journal articles discussing learning strategies, Social Studies instruction, and character education. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and systematic conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that varied and student-centered learning strategies, such as Problem-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, cooperative learning, role-playing, and reflective approaches, are effective in creating meaningful and contextual learning experiences. These strategies not only enhance students' understanding of Social Studies concepts but also effectively instill character values through active student engagement in the learning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of character reinforcement in Social Studies learning is strongly influenced by the teacher's ability and creativity in selecting and implementing appropriate learning strategies that align with students' needs and characteristics.

Keywords: Learning Strategy, Social Studies, Character Values

Introduction

In the 21st century's industrial revolution 4.0, education has been considered a basic need for every individual. Recognizing the importance of education, the Indonesian government stipulates that every citizen has the right to 12 years of education and is encouraged to continue beyond that. Article 1 of the Republic of Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 states that education is a conscious effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential (Munadi et al., 2024). The problems regarding education in Indonesia can be said to be quite complex, especially if it is related to learning strategies that are in accordance with the character or personality of the Indonesian people because in implementing this educational process, of course, it is closely related to character, both those that have been formed and characters that will be formed (Parawangsa et al., 2022).

In general, a strategy is a method or process used to achieve a goal. A strategy is an incremental and continuous action, carried out based on a perspective on the desired goal. A learning strategy is a learning activity that must be carried out by teachers and students to achieve learning objectives effectively and efficiently (Lathifa et al., 2024). The goal of implementing learning strategies is to improve student learning outcomes. With the right strategies, it is hoped that students will more easily understand the subject matter, develop critical thinking skills, and increase their motivation to learn. Furthermore, learning strategies also aim to create a dynamic and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, where students feel involved and actively participate in the learning process (Rianto et al., 2024).

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Paying attention to the understanding and objectives of learning strategies above, it can be concluded that learning strategies are methods that will be chosen and used by a teacher to convey learning material, so that it will make it easier for students to receive and understand the learning material so that ultimately the learning objectives can be mastered at the end of the learning activity (Lamatenggo & Gorontalo, 2020). The right learning strategies can make it easier for students to grasp lesson concepts. Strategies such as using concrete examples, modeling, or problem-solving can help students connect concepts to real-world situations, making them easier to remember (Maulidia et al., 2023).

Social Sciences in Indonesia began to be recognized in the 1970s as a result of an agreement between the academic community. Formally, it began to be used in the national education system in the 1975 curriculum. In this curriculum document, Social Sciences was one of the subjects taught at the elementary and secondary levels (LD Rismayani, IW Kertih, 2020). Furthermore, social studies learning has a noble obligation and serves as an important foundation for students' intellectual, emotional, cultural, and social progress. This learning can improve how students think, act, and behave responsibly as individuals, members of society, and citizens (Ahdar, Muhammad Akbar, 2022).

Social Studies is an important subject in the Indonesian curriculum because it integrates various social science disciplines such as geography, history, economics, and sociology. In the context of learning Social Studies, instilling social attitudes and social responsibility in students is crucial. (Munadi et al., 2024) The goal of social studies learning is for students to understand the problems that exist in their environment. Furthermore, through social studies, students can acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and sensitivity to face life's challenges and achieve success (Masripah et al., 2023).

After that, social studies learning has a noble obligation and becomes an important basis for the intellectual, emotional, cultural and social progress of students, which is able to improve the methods of thinking, acting and behaving responsibly as individuals, society and citizens (Ahdar, Muhammad Akbar, 2022). However, in reality, social studies subjects are still largely taught theoretically and rarely utilize the social environment as a learning resource. Yet, local wisdom values in society are an integral part of students' lives (Harahap, 2024).

According to the Kompas daily, several obstacles were encountered in 2018, particularly in character education. Many character-related issues persist, including student cheating, lateness to school, and violence in schools. Therefore, character education needs to be encouraged (Hasanah, 2022). Instilling character values can be done through education in schools, within the family, and through the community. Education in schools not only demands that students succeed in their studies and achieve high academic results, but also that they possess good attitudes and behavior (Siska et al., 2021). Educational institutions play a crucial role in developing students' character. The hope is that educational institutions can become schools of character, providing a platform for the future generations of the Indonesian nation (Septina Noor Azizah, 2024).

Teachers as agents of change are expected to be able to provide maximum affective education to students by emphasizing the instillation of character-based attitudes and values, including through social studies subjects. Teachers are required to implement character education to students, so that learning objectives can be achieved (Moyudan & Moral, 2013). In an effort to instill character values in learning, teachers need to use the concepts of (1) being student-centered, (2) developing student creativity, (3) creating pleasant conditions, (4) containing values, ethics, aesthetics, logic and kinesthetics, and (5) providing diverse learning experiences through various learning strategies and methods that are pleasant, contextual, effective, efficient and meaningful (Sholiha, 2021).

Character education through social studies will be effective if students are actively involved in discussions, case studies, and project-based activities. Teachers play a crucial role in integrating character values into social studies learning. They act not only as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and role models in social life (Alya, 2025). Related to the explanation above, the importance of character education in all subjects, one of which is Social Sciences, is emphasized. This aims to ensure that the values of character education during the Social Studies learning process, when optimally implemented, are absorbed into the students, thus contributing to character formation in accordance with the expected values (Lu'luul Maknun, Muhammad Fashihullisan, 2025).

This study aims to determine the concept of learning strategies and how social studies learning strategies can develop the character values of elementary school students. With this background, it is hoped that this study will provide insight into the effectiveness of learning strategies used by teachers and the contribution of character education in social studies learning to the development of students' attitudes, behaviors, and social sensitivity.

Method

The method used in writing this article is a qualitative literature study. This method allows researchers to obtain information on similar variables and hypotheses used by previous researchers. In this study, researchers reviewed and analyzed 33 articles from national journals relevant to the research topic, namely those related to learning strategies, social studies learning, and character values.

The data obtained in writing this article is secondary data sourced from previous literature. Books and journal research reference articles used as the main study material in writing this article were obtained from various sources, both national and international journal pages such as Scencedirect, Emerald Insight, Research Gate, Google Scholar, Elsevier, Atlantis press, Sinta Kemdikbud and others. The review process begins with reading the articles selected as literature materials, then reviewed and analyzed to further describe their relationship with the issues that are the topic in this article and then concluded.

The data analysis conducted in this study involved organizing the data, explaining it in a specific format, synthesizing it, arranging it into patterns, selecting data relevant to the research topic, and drawing conclusions that could be explained to others. The data analysis technique used in this interactive study was analysis. The steps of the data analysis technique used began with data collection, followed by data reduction, data presentation, and finally, drawing and verifying conclusions to form a coherent research result.

Results and Discussion

The Concept of Social Studies Learning Strategies Based on Character Education

The basic concept of learning strategies is an important foundation in designing effective and efficient learning processes. In the context of education, learning strategies refer to a series of steps systematically arranged to achieve specific learning objectives (Hasibuan & Sari, 2024). However, in practice, many educators still lack a deep understanding of the basic concepts of learning strategies. This often results in strategies used in learning that are not appropriate for the characteristics of the students or the learning objectives to be achieved (Annisha et al., 2025).

Learning strategies are planned efforts made by teachers to organize and implement the teaching and learning process to achieve the desired learning objectives. In the context of Social Studies learning, learning strategies not only aim to improve students' cognitive aspects but also play a crucial role in shaping their character. Because Social Studies is

directly related to social life, this subject is an effective medium for instilling character values such as responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, and patriotism (Hikmah, 2025). To develop good students, character development is essential within educational institutions. While education itself fosters the younger generation and fosters good character in children, many deviant behaviors are occurring within educational settings (Megawati & Ningsih, 2020).

Education is a process of humanizing people. This process cannot be done instantly and will inevitably require a very long process. As is known, the first level of education is elementary school, which lasts six years. Elementary school plays a crucial role in character formation (Syaumi et al., 2022). Character education is a systematically designed and implemented effort to instill behavioral values in students. Character building is both an inevitability and an obligation that must be a concern for all parties (Sari, 2021).

Character Values Developed Through Social Studies Learning

Characteristics comes from the word "characteristic" which means a distinctive nature or can be understood as a characteristic that distinguishes one from another. Character is a manifestation of a person's understanding and knowledge of noble values in life that originate from cultural, religious and national order such as moral values, ethical values, law, moral values, virtues, religious and cultural law and are manifested in everyday attitudes, behaviors and personalities to be able to distinguish one from another (Hasanah, 2022). A person's character is definitely influenced by several factors, namely: internal and external factors. These internal factors come from our individual hearts, while external factors come from our surrounding environment (Oktaviani & Marini, 2022).

One of the most urgent character educations to implement today is the value of social care, especially within the school environment. Social care is the behavior or attitude of someone who always wants to help others (Nasith, 2022). Social Studies learning in elementary schools plays a strategic role in instilling character values in students. Social Studies not only provides knowledge about social life, but also serves to shape students so they grow into members of society and citizens with social and moral responsibilities (Lu'luul Maknun, Muhammad Fashihullisan, 2025).

In accordance with the character pillars stated in the National Education System Law, the pillars of character include love for God Almighty, honesty, justice, kindness and humility, politeness, respect, mutual cooperation, justice and leadership, independence, creativity, hard work, self-confidence and perseverance, and a love of peace and unity. These pillars need to be practiced not only within the family environment but also within the school environment. This way, what is taught will be permanently embedded in a person's character and become a habit (Azharotunnafi, 2020). Through character education in social studies learning, it is hoped that it will be able to shape children's personalities, so that they become good people, members of society, and citizens, so that they are able to anticipate the symptoms of moral crisis and play a role in developing the younger generation (Adnyana, 2020).

Various social studies learning strategies for character strengthening

Social studies learning for character building emphasizes strategies that enable students to actively understand social reality. Teachers can use Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to invite students to analyze real problems such as social, environmental, or community behavior conflicts so that critical, caring, and responsible characters can be formed (Sudrajat & Budiart, 2020). Furthermore, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) helps build character traits of cooperation and creativity. Through projects such as creating social maps, studying local history, or social campaigns, students learn to plan, share tasks, and

produce tangible products while practicing the values of discipline and mutual cooperation (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Cooperative learning strategies such as STAD, Jigsaw, and TGT are also effective in fostering tolerance and mutual respect. Through group work, students learn to listen to others' opinions, maintain ethical discussion, and complete tasks collaboratively (Fatimah, 2024). Role-playing and simulations can be used to cultivate empathy and fairness. By acting out social situations, students more easily understand different perspectives and learn to make responsible moral decisions (Pudjowati, 2024).

In addition, the integration of a reflective approach through values dialogues, ethical discussions, and character journal writing further strengthens the success of the social studies learning strategy. By providing space for students to reflect on learning experiences, connect actions with moral values, and evaluate their own attitudes, teachers help students build better self-awareness and self-control (Indrawati, E., & Rachmawati, 2021). The application of differentiated instruction in social studies learning can also strengthen character because it provides each student with the opportunity to learn according to their needs, interests, and learning styles. With a variety of assignments, flexible grouping, and appropriate support (scaffolding), students feel valued and recognized for their diversity (Sari, NP, & Wijayanti, 2023).

Therefore, it can be understood that social studies learning no longer merely functions as a means of transferring knowledge, but becomes a vehicle for the formation of values and character, such as critical thinking, empathy, responsibility, tolerance, cooperation, discipline, creativity, and self-awareness. With the right learning strategy, social studies play a strategic role in shaping a generation with strong character, social awareness, the ability to live in diversity, and responsible members of society and the nation.

Conclusion

Social studies learning plays a strategic role in shaping students' character because it incorporates social, moral, and national values inherent in each subject. Various learning strategies, such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, role-playing, differentiated instruction, and the utilization of the social environment, provide space for students to directly experience the process of critical thinking, collaboration, empathy, and responsible decision-making. By implementing varied and appropriate strategies, teachers not only help students understand social studies material but also foster positive character traits such as discipline, caring, honesty, tolerance, and social responsibility. This demonstrates that character building occurs not only through advice, but also through meaningful, interactive, and contextual learning experiences. Therefore, teachers need to continuously improve their pedagogical competence and creativity in designing active social studies learning that is oriented towards character building in the modern education era.

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