

Simulation Method in Social Studies Learning: Student Learning Outcomes at Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the low social studies learning outcomes among fifth-grade students at Elementary School, primarily caused by conventional teaching methods that foster student passivity and difficulty in grasping abstract historical concepts. The study aims to improve learning outcomes by implementing the simulation method, specifically focusing on the history of Indonesian independence. Utilizing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design across two cycles, the study involved 22 students (13 females and 9 males) at Elementary School Wakarleli. Data were collected through observation, achievement tests, and documentation, then analyzed using quantitative descriptive techniques and classical mastery benchmarks. The findings revealed significant improvements at every stage: in the pre-action phase, only 6 students (27.27%) achieved mastery with an average score of 54.44. Following the implementation of simulations in Cycle I, mastery rose to 17 students (77.27%), and reached 19 students (86.36%) in Cycle II after reflective refinements. The simulation method successfully transformed abstract history into concrete, contextual experiences, creating an active and enjoyable learning environment. Practically, this study recommends simulations as an effective strategy for elementary teachers to boost student motivation and contextual understanding. Academically, these results provide a foundation for further research into the effectiveness of simulation methods across broader social studies curricula or different grade levels.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate and organized effort designed to equip learners with the necessary skills for effective social participation through structured teaching and training (Destrini et al., 2018). The quality of this process is heavily reliant on effective learning strategies where the goal is for students to not only understand theoretical concepts but also apply them in real-life contexts (Chiba et al., 2021; Setiawan et al., 2023). Consequently, Social Studies (IPS) serves as a vital

interdisciplinary subject that integrates social sciences, education, and psychology to provide students with pragmatic knowledge and critical thinking skills essential for daily life (Aopamonaim, 2025; Widodo et al., 2020). By fostering social intelligence and sensitivity toward societal issues, this subject aims to develop a student's potential in alignment with their interests and environment (Hopeman et al., 2022).

To achieve these objectives, teachers must act as innovative designers, managers, and evaluators who foster an active classroom environment (Nisriyana & Hermanto, 2023). However, the reality in Indonesian elementary schools reveals a persistent challenge with low learning outcomes, which serve as the primary indicators of academic achievement and future instructional design (Rammayani, 2026; Susilowati & Sutama, 2022). These outcomes are influenced by a combination of internal student factors and external environmental conditions (Slameto, 2015). Current evidence suggests that the prevalence of teacher-centered lecture methods, inadequate media, and a lack of varied instructional models often leads to student disengagement and poor material comprehension (Aini et al., 2024; Ariadila et al., 2023).

Initial observations at Elementary School Wakarleli reveal that fifth-grade social studies learning is heavily dominated by conventional methods, leading to student passivity and limited engagement. Consequently, students struggle to grasp the material, resulting in learning outcomes that consistently fall below the established Minimum Completeness Criteria. This situation highlights an urgent need for pedagogical innovation to improve both student involvement and academic achievement through more dynamic instructional strategies.

To address these challenges, the simulation method serves as a viable alternative for enhancing the quality of social studies education (Sanina et al., 2020; Uzun & Uygun, 2022). According to Sanjaya, this method trains students' skills through an imitation process that mirrors actual conditions, fostering the ability to interact and communicate within groups (Munawir et al., 2023). Furthermore, the integration of ICT-based simulation methods has been shown to have positive implications for student activeness in elementary school settings (Rahmaniar & Prastowo, 2022).

The implementation of simulations offers distinct advantages tailored to the developmental characteristics of elementary students, such as creating a cheerful atmosphere that aids long-term retention and boosts self-confidence (DiCamillo & Gradwell, 2013; Intang et al., 2022; Ogheneakoke et al., 2019). Research by Hartshorne et al. (2019) indicates that direct involvement in this method significantly enhances learning activeness and outcomes. As noted by Rusman, simulations serve to develop practical life skills, persuasion abilities, and problem-solving techniques while shifting the educational paradigm toward active student learning (Uzun & Uygun, 2022; Wright-Maley, 2015).

Empirical evidence further supports the effectiveness of this approach, with studies by Ayu Pitaloka and Saputri (2020) and Azizah (2022) demonstrating a significant positive influence on social studies outcomes. Driven by these theoretical and practical foundations, the study aims to improve learning outcomes by implementing the simulation method, specifically focusing on the history of Indonesian independence

for fifth grade at Elementary School Wakarleli, and seeks to analyze how this student-centered method can transform academic performance. The findings are expected to contribute significantly to the advancement of innovative elementary social studies practices.

2. METHOD

This study utilizes a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, specifically structured to address and rectify the low social studies learning outcomes among observed fifth-grade students at Elementary School Wakarleli. By implementing a targeted pedagogical treatment through the simulation method, the research aims to transform the classroom dynamic from a passive, teacher-centered environment into an active, participatory one. The study was conducted regularly across two distinct learning cycles, ensuring that each phase was grounded in empirical evidence and pedagogical reflection to maximize the improvement of student achievement.

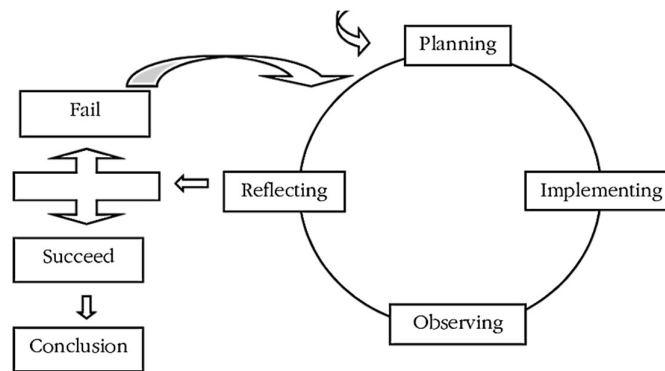


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research (CAR) Design

The research subjects consisted of 22 students, consisting of 13 females and 9 males, providing a representative gender balance for the fifth-grade cohort. The procedural framework followed the established CAR model, encompassing four iterative stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. This cyclical approach allows for continuous refinement of the simulation techniques, ensuring that the instructional strategy remains responsive to the specific learning needs and challenges encountered by the students during the intervention.

Data collection was executed through a multi-method approach, integrating observation, learning achievement tests, and documentation. Observations focused on student engagement and the teacher's adherence to the simulation protocols, while standardized tests provided the quantitative metrics necessary to measure cognitive gains. These tools allowed for a comprehensive dataset that captured both the learning process and the final academic outcomes. The documentation served as a vital record of the classroom transformation, supporting the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Data analysis techniques in this Classroom Action Research (CAR) were conducted descriptively, quantitatively, and qualitatively to provide a comprehensive picture of improvements in student learning outcomes. After the quantitative and qualitative data were collected, a comparative analysis was conducted to compare learning outcomes between the pre-action phase, Cycle I, and Cycle II. This was done to identify specific obstacles, such as technical difficulties during the simulation or difficulties understanding abstract historical concepts. If the results in Cycle I did not reach the 85% classical mastery success indicator, the results of in-depth reflection were used as a basis for strategic improvements to the action plan in Cycle II, ensuring that interventions were more targeted and continuously improved the quality of learning.

The calculation results obtained from these formulas are then compared comparatively with the Minimum Completion Criteria standards applicable at State Elementary School Wakarleli, as presented in detail in Table 1. This comparative analysis serves as the main indicator for measuring the effectiveness of the simulation method in improving students' academic achievement and determining the level of classical completion success that has been set in the criteria of this study.

Table 1. Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM)

Minimum Completeness Criteria	Description
≥ 65	Complete
≤ 65	Incomplete

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Pre-Action Research Results

The data presented in Table 2, the results of pre-action observations indicate that the learning achievement of fifth grade students of Wakarleli State Elementary School is still below the completion standard, with the average class score only reaching 54.44. In detail, it was recorded that 16 students (72.73%) had not reached the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM), while only 6 students (27.27%) succeeded in exceeding the threshold of ≥ 65 . Thus, the classical completion percentage of 27.27% has significantly not met the minimum success indicator set at 65%, thus emphasizing the need for intervention through a class action cycle to improve student learning outcomes collectively.

Table 2. Percentage of Pre-Action Learning Outcome Completeness Level

No	Completeness Level	KKM	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Complete	≥ 65	6	27.27%
2	Incomplete	≤ 65	16	72.73%
	Total		22	100%

Viewed from the table of initial test score results for fifth-grade students at Elementary School Wakarleli, it shows that from 22 students who took the initial test, there were 16 students with scores ≤ 65 who were declared incomplete in learning, while there were 6 students who had achieved scores ≥ 65 and were declared in the complete category. This was due to students' lack of understanding of the material on

Indonesian independence preparation and formulation of state foundation. Thus, it was necessary to continue to the Cycle 1 learning process.

Cycle I Research Results

The planning stage in Cycle I began with an in-depth identification of student learning challenges, followed by the development of simulation-based learning tools. Strategic steps included developing a Learning Implementation Plan that integrated real-life situation simulations to reinforce concepts, preparing relevant learning media, and developing group worksheets and learning outcome evaluation instruments. This entire planning process was implemented in two meetings, with the researcher acting directly as a classroom practitioner to ensure the intervention followed the intended simulation method.

During the observation process, supervised by the supervising teacher, student participation in following instructions, group work, and responses to the Indonesian independence material were deemed quite positive. However, reflection results at the end of Cycle I indicated that the classical learning completion rate had not yet reached the 85% target. Some students still struggled to understand the questions on the worksheets and lacked confidence when presenting discussion results. Technical challenges, such as passive students and a lack of accuracy in completing assignments, were crucial findings requiring improvement in the next cycle, particularly in optimizing the application of the simulation method to make it more adaptable to the ability to understand complex historical material.

Table 3. Percentage of Cycle I

No	Completeness Level	KKM	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Complete	≥ 65	17	77.27%
2	Incomplete	≤ 65	5	22.73%
	Total		22	100%

The learning achievement data for Cycle I, presented in Table 3, demonstrates significant improvement, with 17 of 22 fifth-grade students at Elementary School Wakarleli achieving scores of 65 or higher and being declared individually successful. This success was driven by increased student engagement in the learning process, which facilitated their completion of assessment instruments, as well as their growing confidence in actively interacting through question-and-answer sessions and class presentations.

On the other hand, five students still fell short of the minimum completion threshold, with scores of 65 or lower. This was due to low participation in group work and limited understanding of specific material on the preparation for independence and the formulation of the Indonesian state philosophy. These findings provide an important foundation for strengthening strategies in the next cycle to ensure all students are fully engaged and achieve the established competency standards.

Cycle II Research Results

The planning phase of Cycle II focused on developing learning techniques to refine the interventions implemented in the previous cycle. This strategy was implemented through the development of a Lesson Plan and Student Worksheets, integrating fun learning methods to create a more dynamic classroom atmosphere. During the implementation phase, which took place over two meetings, the teacher implemented visual reinforcement through drawings on manila cardboard and emphasized disciplined yet participatory classroom management, where each group was given ample space to explore the material through structured question-and-answer sessions.

Observations conducted with a partner observer revealed significant improvements in student attention, motivation, and activeness, as their interest in the simulation method increased. Reflection results confirmed that the persuasive approach and continuous motivation successfully fostered student confidence, both in expressing opinions and solving problems in front of the class. Student collaboration was also strengthened through a culture of mutual assistance within the group, effectively addressing challenges in understanding the material that arose in the previous cycle through a more collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Table 4. Percentage of Cycle II Learning Outcome Completeness Level

No	KKM	Completeness Level	Number of Students	Percentage
1	≥65	Complete	19	86.36%
2	≤65	Incomplete	3	13.64%
		Total	22	100%

Learning achievement data for Cycle II showed very positive improvement, with 19 of 22 fifth-grade students at Elementary School Wakarleli achieving scores of 65 or higher and being declared individually successful. This success directly correlated with increased student engagement during the learning process, where the use of more sophisticated simulation methods facilitated their understanding of the material and their ability to answer the assessment instruments correctly. Furthermore, students' growing confidence in speaking in front of the class and their courage in asking reflective questions were strong indicators of the successful transformation of the learning climate into a more participatory one.

However, three students still failed to reach the minimum completion threshold, with scores of 65 or lower. This was due to the need for more intensive mentoring and limited mastery of historical material related to the preparation for independence and the formulation of the national foundation. Overall, however, the results in this cycle demonstrated a significant trend of competency growth compared to the previous phase, demonstrating that the applied approach was able to minimize barriers to collective learning.

Discussion

Classroom Action Research conducted at Wakarleli Public Elementary School in fifth-grade social studies demonstrated significant improvements in student learning outcomes through the implementation of simulation methods. Analysis of the research

findings in Cycles I and II was conducted by referring to various theoretical studies and relevant previous research. In the pre-action phase, data showed that out of 22 students, only 6 (27.27%) achieved learning mastery, with a class average score of 54.44. This finding confirms that conventional learning is unable to facilitate optimal learning outcomes, aligning with the findings of [Novianti et al. \(2020\)](#) who stated that the dominance of teacher-centered lecture methods leads to low student engagement and impacts academic achievement.

After the intervention in Cycle I, which implemented simulation methods, there was a jump in learning mastery to 17 students (77.27%). This increase demonstrates the effectiveness of simulation methods in encouraging active student engagement in the learning process. This is aligned with research by [Lisnawati et al. \(2022\)](#) confirmed that a student-centered active learning model can significantly improve social studies learning outcomes at the elementary school level. The characteristics of the simulation method, which can activate students, are key to this transformation in learning outcomes.

The success of the simulation method is also supported by research by [Rokhmah \(2023\)](#), who concluded that a fun learning atmosphere through simulations makes the material more memorable for students. In her study, Rokhmah recorded an increase in completion rates from 39.29% in the pre-cycle to 92.86% in Cycle II. However, in the study at Elementary School Wakarleli, there were still 5 students (22.73%) who did not complete Cycle I due to a lack of confidence during presentations and suboptimal group participation. These findings provide a crucial foundation for researchers to make strategic improvements in the next cycle to ensure all students achieve the expected competency standards.

The implementation of Cycle II was carried out by making strategic improvements based on the results of the Cycle I reflection. The teacher provided more intensive motivation, encouraged stronger group collaboration, and provided individual guidance for students experiencing difficulties. The results of these improvements showed significant improvement, with 19 students (86.36%) successfully achieving learning mastery. The increase in the completion percentage from 77.27% in Cycle I to 86.36% in Cycle II demonstrates that the instructional adjustments significantly increased the effectiveness of classroom learning.

The success of the simulation method in improving learning outcomes can be explained through constructivist learning theory, where students are encouraged to construct their own knowledge through direct experience. Consistent with [Widoyo et al.'s \(2023\)](#) findings, implementing an active, innovative, creative, and enjoyable learning model can significantly improve learning outcomes. This is supported by the findings of [Hidayah et al. \(2023\)](#), which empirically demonstrated that student-centered learning resulted in significantly higher levels of engagement compared to control classes using conventional models.

This improvement in academic achievement is also closely correlated with the strengthening of student motivation and self-confidence during the simulation process. As emphasized by [Abdullah and Boleng \(2022\)](#), active student engagement in

innovative learning models consistently improves educational outcomes. Field observations demonstrate a transformation in student behavior, from initially passive to more confident in asking questions, responding to challenges, and expressing opinions in public. Furthermore, [Fajrianti and Meilana \(2022\)](#) state that the use of interactive methods can enrich the learning experience and facilitate understanding of abstract social studies concepts.

Cumulatively, the increasing trend in completion from an initial 27.27% to 77.27% in Cycle I, and a peak of 86.36% in Cycle II, confirms the simulation method as an effective alternative for improving the quality of learning in elementary schools. These results support the perspective of [BK and Hamna \(2023\)](#) regarding the consistency of active learning models in boosting student achievement. Thus, this classroom action research demonstrates that the simulation method, in the preparation for Indonesian independence material, successfully optimizes both cognitive understanding and affective engagement of students at Elementary School Wakarleli. The implication of these research results is that social studies teachers in elementary schools need to consider using the simulation method as an alternative learning strategy to improve student learning outcomes, especially on historical materials that require contextual understanding. In addition, teachers also need to continue developing their professional competence in implementing various innovative learning methods to create quality learning

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the simulation method in fifth-grade social studies at Elementary School Wakarleli, particularly on the preparation for independence and the formulation of the Indonesian state philosophy, has proven effective in significantly improving student learning outcomes. This is demonstrated by a substantial increase in the percentage of classical completion, starting from the pre-action stage of 27.27% (6 out of 22 students), increasing to 77.27% (17 students) in Cycle I, and reaching a peak of 86.36% (19 students) in Cycle II. The success of this academic transformation is driven by the creation of an active, participatory, and enjoyable learning environment that can increase student motivation, as well as the presentation of contextual learning experiences that transform abstract historical concepts into more concrete ones. In addition, the use of the simulation method has been empirically proven to hone communication skills and foster students' confidence in expressing opinions in public.

As a recommendation, it is recommended for educators to consistently implement simulation methods in social studies learning, particularly in historical material, by developing well-thought-out simulation scenarios to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers should provide more intensive guidance and motivation for students who face learning obstacles, as well as conduct continuous reflection and evaluation to improve the quality of instruction in the future. For future researchers, it is recommended to examine the effectiveness of simulation methods on a broader range of social studies material or at different grade

levels while still considering the characteristics of students and the context of the relevant learning environment.

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