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## SOCIAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION | RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Teachers' Strategies in Fostering Students' Intrinsic Motivation in Social Studies Learning In Elementary School

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**Abstract:** This study aims to (1) explore teachers' strategies in fostering students' intrinsic motivation in Social Studies (IPS) learning in elementary schools in Makassar City, and (2) identify the obstacles faced by teachers in increasing students' intrinsic motivation. The approach used in this study was qualitative, with a descriptive research design. Data were obtained through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and learning documentation. The results showed that the strategies applied by teachers to foster students' intrinsic motivation included contextual learning, problem-based learning (PBL), providing positive feedback, and using technology. However, the teachers faced several obstacles, including limited time, inadequate facilities, and insufficient professional training. This study suggests improving access to technology, providing further training for teachers, and allocating sufficient time to the curriculum to support the implementation of strategies that can increase students' intrinsic motivation.

**Keywords:** Intrinsic Motivation, Social Studies Learning, Learning Strategies.

### 1. Introduction

Basic education is a critical stage in shaping students' character and developing their fundamental skills, which will form the foundation for success at the next level of education. At this stage, students begin to learn various concepts and skills necessary for their lives, including understanding social studies (IPS), which provides insight into society, culture, history, and economics. One of the primary objectives of education is to develop students' ability to think critically and creatively, as well as to understand their role in the broader community. However, to achieve this goal, a strong motivation to learn is required. Learning motivation is a key factor in determining students' success in learning (Fernando et al., 2024; Hidayani Syam, 2024). Intrinsic motivation, which is the drive to learn that comes from the students themselves, plays a crucial role in the meaningful learning process. Intrinsically motivated students learn because they are interested in the material and find satisfaction in the learning process itself, rather than because of external rewards such as grades or awards (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the elementary level, intrinsic motivation is fundamental because students at this age have a high level of curiosity and drive to explore the world around them.

Social Studies (IPS) learning in elementary schools offers numerous opportunities to foster students' intrinsic motivation. The SOCS covers topics such as society, culture, economics, history, and geography, which are highly relevant to students' daily lives, allowing them to see a direct connection between the lessons taught and their social world. Therefore, contextual and experience-based SOCS learning can strengthen students' interest in learning and understanding more about their surroundings (Hopeman, Hidayah, and Anggraeni, 2022). However, although the importance of intrinsic motivation is recognized in various educational studies, teachers face many challenges in fostering this motivation in the classroom. The primary obstacle teachers face is determining and



implementing the most effective learning strategies to foster students' intrinsic motivation. Several strategies, such as problem-based learning (PBL), contextual learning, project-based learning, and the use of technology, have been proven to increase students' intrinsic motivation. However, many strategies often confuse teachers in determining the most appropriate method based on the characteristics of their students and classroom conditions. This study aims to:

1. Describe teachers' strategies to foster students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning in elementary schools.
2. Identify the obstacles teachers face in increasing students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning in elementary schools.

Thus, this study aims not only to explore practical strategies for increasing students' intrinsic motivation but also to identify various obstacles that teachers may encounter when implementing these strategies. The results of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for teachers to enhance the quality of social studies learning and contribute to the development of a curriculum that better supports students' intrinsic motivation.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1. Intrinsic Motivation in Learning

Intrinsic motivation is an internal drive to learn that arises from interest, curiosity, and personal satisfaction rather than external factors such as rewards or punishments. Intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in the context of learning, as it enables students to actively participate, explore new knowledge, and sustain their interest in learning over the long term (Fernando et al., 2024). At the elementary school level, intrinsic motivation is a crucial factor in student engagement, as students learn through curiosity and direct experience. In Social Studies (IPS) learning, intrinsic motivation can grow when students feel that the material is relevant to their daily lives, understand social phenomena occurring in their environment, and feel that the learning process provides opportunities for critical thinking and cooperation. Therefore, the role of teachers is crucial in creating a learning environment that fosters the development of intrinsic motivation.

### 2.2. Learning Strategies to Increase Intrinsic Motivation

#### a. Contextual Learning

The contextual approach (Contextual Teaching and Learning/CTL) connects learning materials to real life, making learning more meaningful and relevant for students (Hidayat & Widjajanti, 2018). Real-life contexts help students understand social study concepts through direct experience, which ultimately increases their interest and curiosity. Research has shown that contextual learning can increase intrinsic motivation because students understand the direct benefits of the material they are studying.

#### b. Problem-Based Learning

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a learning approach that requires students to solve authentic problems independently or in groups. According to Anazifa and Djukri (2017), PBL increases intrinsic motivation because it provides cognitive challenges, encourages curiosity, and allows students to control their learning processes. In social studies, PBL can be applied through the analysis of social problems, such as environmental issues, traffic congestion, or social conflicts.

#### c. Providing Positive Feedback

Feedback is a crucial element of learning that can enhance students' self-confidence and perceptions of competence. Emphasized that effective feedback is clear, specific, and focused on the student's process or effort, not just the results. Positive feedback has been shown to strengthen intrinsic motivation because it signals that students' efforts are valued and appreciated.

#### d. Use of Learning Technology

The integration of technology into learning, such as interactive videos, digital media, and educational applications, can enhance student engagement, particularly in social studies, which often requires visual illustrations. Technology can create a more interesting, enjoyable, and relevant learning experience for students who are familiar with digital devices (Salomo Leuwol et al., 2023)

### 2.3. Teachers' Obstacles in Increasing Intrinsic Motivation

Although various strategies can be employed, elementary school teachers often face several obstacles.

#### a. Time Constraints

Time constraints are a significant obstacle because teachers must adjust their learning schedules to a dense curriculum, making innovative learning strategies, such as PBL or CTL, challenging to implement.

#### b. Facility Limitations

Not all schools have adequate facilities, including technological devices, learning media, and Internet access. Lack of learning resources hinders teachers from integrating technology-based learning strategies.

#### c. Lack of Professional Training

Limited training hinders teachers' ability to effectively apply innovative learning methods. According to some studies, untrained teachers tend to revert to conventional methods that are less capable of fostering intrinsic motivation.

### 2.4. Hypothesis Development

Based on theoretical studies and previous research results, the hypotheses developed in this study are as follows:

H1: Contextual learning has a positive effect on students' intrinsic motivation to study social studies.

H2: Problem-based learning (PBL) significantly increases students' intrinsic motivation.

H3: Positive feedback from teachers positively affects students' intrinsic motivation.

## 3. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing descriptive statistics. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aimed to explore in-depth information about teachers' strategies in fostering students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning in elementary schools, as well as to identify the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing these strategies. This approach focuses more on understanding and interpreting the ongoing educational context, providing a clear picture of actual practices in the field. This qualitative approach aligns with Creswell's (2019) assertion that it is more suitable for explaining phenomena involving social interactions in natural contexts.

### 3.1. Research Design

This research design is descriptive, aiming to describe and reveal the phenomena that occur in social studies learning practices in elementary schools. This design was used because the research aimed to describe the actual practices occurring in the field and provide in-depth insights into the application of learning strategies by teachers and their impact on students' intrinsic motivation. In

line with Neuman's view, qualitative descriptive research is employed to gain a deep understanding without manipulating variables, thereby obtaining richer and more authentic information.

### 3.2. Location and Participants

This study was conducted in several elementary schools in Makassar City. The location was chosen based on the consideration that Makassar City has social and cultural diversity that allows researchers to obtain diverse perspectives on the application of intrinsic motivation strategies in learning social studies. In line with this, Kala and Subramaniam (2022) stated that selecting a research location that aligns with the social context provides a deeper understanding and greater relevance to the phenomenon being studied. The participants of this study were as follows.

- Social studies teachers who teach fifth and sixth grades at elementary schools in Makassar City were selected based on their teaching experience in social studies. Teachers were selected based on the diversity of their experiences and the teaching techniques applied in the classroom.
- Students from the same classes were selected randomly, considering the diversity of their social and cultural backgrounds, so that they could represent a broader range of experiences.

### 3.3. Data Collection Techniques

The data in this study were collected using the following techniques.

1. Classroom Observation: The researcher conducted direct observations of the social studies learning process in the classroom to record how teachers applied learning strategies aimed at fostering students' intrinsic motivation, as well as how students responded and engaged in learning activities. Classroom observations were conducted using guidelines developed based on indicators relevant to intrinsic motivation strategies proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000), in Self-Determination Theory.
2. In-depth Interviews: Interviews were conducted with teachers to explore their understanding of the strategies they used in social studies learning, as well as the obstacles they faced in increasing students' intrinsic motivation. Interviews were also conducted with several students to determine their perceptions of learning social studies and the motivation they felt in attending classes. This in-depth interview approach refers to the methodology described by Suri (2011) to obtain richer data that were not influenced by the researcher's interpretation.
3. Documentation: The researcher collected learning documents used by teachers, such as syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), and assignments given to students. This documentation was used to explore the learning strategies applied by teachers in accordance with the procedures proposed by Moleong (2018) in qualitative research.

### 3.4. Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study were as follows.

1. Interview guidelines: To explore the views of teachers and students regarding the learning strategies applied and obstacles encountered in increasing students' intrinsic motivation.
2. Observation sheets were used to record and analyze the learning activities carried out by teachers, as well as interactions between teachers and students during the learning process.
3. Learning documentation: This includes learning planning documents, such as lesson plans and learning materials used by teachers.

### 3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis was carried out in several stages.

1. Data Reduction: The collected data were filtered and selected to match the focus of Sunardi's research. (Sunardi, Nugroho, and Setiawan 2019)
2. Data Categorization: Relevant data were grouped into main themes related to learning strategies and obstacles faced by teachers.
3. Data Presentation: After the data are grouped, the results are presented in the form of a narrative describing the main findings of the study.
4. Conclusion Drawing: Based on thematic analysis, the researcher will conclude the strategies applied by teachers as well as the obstacles faced in increasing students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning.

### 3.6. Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study used source triangulation techniques. Triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of interviews with teachers, interviews with students, and classroom observations. In this way, it is hoped that more valid and accountable data can be obtained regarding the learning strategies applied by teachers and the obstacles they face.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Analysis Result

This study aimed to explore the strategies used by teachers to foster students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning in elementary schools in Makassar City, as well as to identify the obstacles teachers face in increasing students' intrinsic motivation. Based on the data obtained through observation, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation, the main findings of this study are as follows:

1. Strategies Implemented by Teachers  
Teachers employ various strategies to promote students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning.
  - a. Contextual Learning: Teachers relate learning materials to students' daily lives. Social studies materials that discuss topics such as history, geography, and socioculture are linked to events relevant to students' lives, including social issues in their community.
  - b. Problem-Based Learning (PBL): Teachers use real problems in society as learning material. Students are asked to work in groups, analyze problems, and find solutions, such as solving social or environmental problems.
  - c. Positive Feedback: Teachers provide feedback that is based not only on results but also on students' efforts in the learning process. Praise is given to the students' efforts and involvement, which increases their confidence and motivation to continue learning.
  - d. Use of Technology: Teachers use technology to make learning more interactive, such as interactive maps, educational videos, and game-based applications to increase student engagement in social studies material.
2. Challenges Faced by Teachers  
Despite the implementation of various strategies, some of the obstacles teachers face in fostering students' intrinsic motivation are:

- a. Time Constraints: The large amount of material that must be delivered in a limited time makes it difficult for teachers to implement more active strategies, such as project-based learning or group discussions.
- b. Limited Facilities and Resources: Some schools in Makassar City experience limitations in terms of the facilities and resources to support technology-based learning. For example, there is a lack of access to computers or stable internet connections.
- c. Lack of Professional Training for Teachers: Although teachers have implemented various strategies, they feel that they are not sufficiently trained to develop skills that can increase students' intrinsic motivation, especially when using technology or active learning methods (Wantiana & Mellisa, 2023).
- d. Challenges in Building Emotional Connections: Some teachers find it difficult to build strong emotional connections with students, especially in larger classes with diverse student characteristics, which can affect the implementation of an emotional-connection-based approach.

#### 4.2. Discussion

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that teachers' strategies to foster students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning in elementary schools in Makassar City have been effective in increasing student engagement. However, some obstacles still need to be overcome. This discussion further discusses the application of strategies and theoretical support relevant to the research findings.

##### 1. Teacher Strategies for Fostering Intrinsic Motivation in Students

- a. Contextual Learning  
Contextual learning has proven to be one of the most effective strategies for fostering students' intrinsic motivation. By connecting social studies materials to students' real lives, such as linking history or geography topics to local events, students feel more connected and motivated to learn. This aligns with Piaget's Constructivist Theory, as presented in Rubtsov (2020), which posits that knowledge is more meaningful when linked to students' existing experiences. Additionally, according to Ryan and Deci (2000), an approach that connects material to the students' world can fulfill their need for autonomy, which is important for increasing intrinsic motivation.
- b. PBL Learning  
Problem-Based Learning (PBL) strategies are also applied by elementary school teachers in Makassar. In this learning method, students are given real-world problems to solve, thereby increasing their involvement in the learning process. PBL provides opportunities for students to think critically, work together in groups, and apply knowledge they have learned in real-life contexts. This approach aligns with the Self-Determination Theory proposed by Goldfarb, Golan, and Gal (2023), which suggests that students' intrinsic motivation can increase when they are allowed to overcome challenges relevant to their lives and collaborate with their peers.
- c. Giving Positive Feedback  
Positive feedback from teachers is crucial for enhancing students' intrinsic motivation. This study found that students who were praised for their efforts, not just their final results, showed an increase in motivation to continue learning. This supports Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Priyambodo et al., 2022), which explains that social reinforcement and positive feedback can enhance students' sense of competence and confidence, thereby strengthening their intrinsic motivation. The use of technology in social studies learning has been proven effective in increasing students' intrinsic motivation. With the use of interactive maps, educational videos, and gamification-based applications, students have become more engaged and interested in learning.

This finding is consistent with those of Salomo et al. (2023), who state that digital native students are more interested and motivated to learn using technology. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Priyambodo et al., 2022) also supports the use of technology, as it enables students to learn through social interaction with media and devices with which they are familiar.

## 2. Challenges Faced by Teachers

### a. Time Constraints

The time constraints experienced by teachers when delivering materials are significant obstacles to effective teaching. According to Tuckman (Levus & Lysii, 2021), limited time can reduce opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills through more active methods, such as project-based learning. However, some teachers in Makassar are trying to overcome this problem by using time more efficiently, such as by integrating active methods into shorter lessons.

### b. Limited Facilities and Resources

Although technology is considered important for increasing students' intrinsic motivation, the limited facilities in some schools are a significant obstacle. Maxwell (Kala & Subramaniam, 2022), in his Theory of Needs, states that in order to achieve optimal learning, basic needs such as adequate facilities must be met first. The lack of access to technology hinders some teachers from implementing strategies that can increase students' intrinsic motivation through digital media.

### c. Lack of Professional Training

Limited training of teachers using active learning methods is another challenge. Most teachers believe that they require additional training in implementing strategies, such as project-based learning or the effective use of technology. It is worth noting that more focused training is necessary to equip teachers with practical skills that align with today's educational needs.

### d. Challenges in Building Emotional Connections

Building strong emotional connections with students is also a challenge for teachers. Vygotsky (Newman & Latifi, 2021) emphasizes the importance of emotional connections between teachers and students in creating a learning environment that can intrinsically motivate students. However, in large classes with diverse student characteristics, teachers often struggle to establish deep relationships with each student, which can impact the effectiveness of emotion-based strategies.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the learning strategies employed by teachers in Makassar City, including contextual learning, problem-based learning (PBL), providing positive feedback, and utilizing technology, are effective in promoting students' intrinsic motivation in social studies learning. However, teachers face obstacles, such as limited time, inadequate facilities, and insufficient professional training, which hinder the complete application of these strategies. Based on these findings, it is recommended that learning time be made more flexible, facilities and technology be improved, and that teachers receive additional training to increase the effectiveness of intrinsic motivation-based learning strategies. Thus, the quality of social study learning in elementary schools can be significantly improved.

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