



Fostering Civic Engagement Through Heroes' History in MI Grade 5

Okvi Maharani*

Semarang State University, Indonesia
okvi83mh@students.unnes.ac.id

Erni Suharini

Semarang State University, Indonesia
erni.suharini@mail.unnes.ac.id

Arif Widiyatmoko

Semarang State University, Indonesia
arif.widiyatmoko@mail.unnes.ac.id

*Correspondence: okvi83mh@students.unnes.ac.id

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Abstract

This research aims to describe the role of learning about the historical struggle of heroes in developing civic engagement among 5th grade Elementary Madrasah (MI) students through an inquiry approach that integrates STEM-R (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Religion). The method used is qualitative descriptive with data collection through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of reflection tasks and Student Work Sheets (LKPD). The results show that the integration of STEM-R into history learning enhances students' understanding of heroes' struggles and nurtures values such as of courage, sacrifice, mutual assistance, and steadfast faith which are applicable in daily life. Students become more active, creative, and motivated in their learning and demonstrate civic engagement through real-life action. Although differences in comprehension levels remain, this approach significantly contributes to character building. The findings imply that STEM-R and inquiry-and inquiry-based learning not only improve content mastery but also serve as effective frameworks for value education in primary schools. Practically, educators are encouraged to adopt STEM-R strategies to foster civic awareness and student participation beyond the classroom. Further implementation should include personalized support to ensure all learners internalize heroic values meaningfully.

Keywords: History Of Heroes Struggle, STEM-R, Inquiry, Civic Engagement, Elementary Madrasah

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran pembelajaran sejarah perjuangan pahlawan dalam mengembangkan civic engagement pada siswa kelas 5 MI melalui pendekatan inkuiri yang mengintegrasikan STEM-R (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Religion). Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, serta analisis tugas refleksi dan Lembar Kerja Peserta Didik (LKPD). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi STEM-R dalam pembelajaran sejarah mampu meningkatkan pemahaman siswa terhadap materi perjuangan pahlawan serta menumbuhkan nilai-nilai keberanian, pengorbanan, gotong royong, dan keteguhan iman yang diaplikasikan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Siswa menjadi lebih aktif, kreatif, dan termotivasi dalam mengikuti pembelajaran dan melakukan aksi nyata yang mencerminkan civic engagement. Meskipun terdapat perbedaan tingkat pemahaman di antara siswa, pendekatan ini memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam membangun karakter dan keterlibatan sosial. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pengembangan pembelajaran berbasis inkuiri dan STEM-R secara berkelanjutan serta pendekatan personal untuk mendukung semua siswa menginternalisasi nilai-nilai perjuangan pahlawan.

Kata Kunci: pahlawan, STEM-R, inkuiri, kewarganegaraan, MI

INTRODUCTION

History education is one of the important aspects of the curriculum in Indonesia, which aims to introduce students to the nation's journey in achieving independence (Shoviana et al., 2025). One of the topics that is the achievement of Natural and Social Science Learning in grade 5 is the struggle of Indonesian heroes. The struggle of the heroes in fighting imperialism and defending independence is a source of inspiration and learning for the younger generation to understand the importance of national values and fighting spirit (Gunawan, 2025). This learning is expected to shape the character of students who are oriented towards common interests and social responsibility, which in turn encourages the formation of civic engagement (Sun et al., 2023).

However, although the material on the struggle of heroes has become an integral part of the history curriculum in schools, there are major challenges related to students' understanding of this material. Several studies have shown that many students do not understand the history of the struggle of heroes in depth, and even feel that the material is far from their daily lives. This has an impact on the low level of student involvement in various social activities related to citizenship, such as participation in mutual cooperation activities, community organization activities, or developing an attitude of responsibility towards the surrounding environment.

Along with the development of character-based education, especially through the Merdeka curriculum, there is an urgent need to link learning the history of the heroes' struggle with the development of civic engagement in students. Civic engagement, which involves active participation in the social and political life of society, is very important for building students' social awareness and responsibility towards the state and society (Herliyanto, 2023). In this context, the history of the heroes' struggle is not only seen as knowledge of the past, but also as a source of inspiration for real action in students' daily lives.

Previous studies have shown that history learning that emphasizes the introduction of national heroes and their struggles can strengthen students' patriotism and increase their participation in social activities (Sun et al., 2023). Other research suggests that when historical content is connected to everyday contexts, students tend to better understand

the values of heroic struggles and are more likely to apply them in real-life actions (Balcazar et al., 2024). However, few studies have directly examined the specific role of learning about heroes' struggles in fostering civic engagement among elementary school students, especially through integrative approaches such as STEM-R and inquiry-based learning. Therefore, this study contributes to the academic discourse by offering a novel perspective on how the integration of STEM-R in history education not only enhances students' cognitive understanding of historical events but also plays a significant role in shaping civic character and social involvement from an early age.

Constructivist learning theory, proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, supports this approach by emphasizing that students construct their knowledge through direct experience and social interaction (Wardana et al., 2025). In this case, learning the history of the heroes' struggle can be done through an inquiry approach that involves students in searching for information, group discussions, and reflection on the values contained in the heroes' struggle (Hutapea et al., 2021). This approach allows students to connect historical knowledge with their life experiences, which in turn can increase their understanding of the importance of civic engagement (Usmi & Samsuri, 2022).

In addition, the theory of character education also provides an important foundation in developing civic engagement through history learning. According to Lickona, character education aims to develop deep moral and social values in students, such as responsibility, cooperation, and sacrifice, which are also reflected in the struggles of heroes (Loloagin et al., 2023). Thus, learning the history of the struggles of heroes can serve as a means to instill character values that support civic engagement among students (Rahman & Prasetyo, 2024).

However, the existing research gap shows that although there are theories that support the development of civic engagement through history education, there are not many studies that specifically examine how learning the history of heroes' struggles can directly affect the level of students' social engagement, especially at the elementary school level. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the role of learning the history of heroes' struggles in developing civic engagement in grade 5 MI students.

In this study, the author will focus on grade 5 MI, which is the initial level of students in understanding the history of the nation's struggle. This is important because at this age, students are in a critical stage of cognitive and social development to build self-awareness as part of a wider society (Irfiani, Febri Liani, 2024). History learning that links the struggle of heroes with civic values is expected to be a driver for forming sustainable civic engagement among students (Musnandar, 2021), which in turn contributes to the formation of national character in the future (Balcazar et al., 2024).

This research is expected to contribute to the development of more relevant and applicable history learning methods, as well as provide insight for educators and policy makers in designing a curriculum that can increase students' social involvement and strengthen national values from an early age.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method that aims to explore, understand, and describe in depth the role of learning Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) material on the struggle of heroes in developing civic engagement in grade 5 MI students. The descriptive qualitative method was chosen because this study aims to describe the phenomena that occur in learning and analyze them from the perspective of students and

teachers. With this approach, researchers can understand students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences (Lin, 2015).

This research was conducted in MI which has 35 students in grade 5. Students in this class are around 10-11 years old and follow a religion-based curriculum. In this study, all students in grade 5 were made research subjects who would be observed and interviewed to dig deeper into the understanding of the history of the heroes' struggle, as well as how they apply these values in their daily lives.

To collect the data needed in this study, the researcher used several in-depth and holistic data collection techniques, including:

a. Participatory Observation

The researcher conducted direct observations during the learning process, especially when students participated in group discussion activities, experiments, and reflections on the struggles of Indonesian heroes. This observation aims to observe the interactions between students, their reactions to learning, and how they discuss the material given. The researcher also observed how students relate the material on the struggles of heroes to the values of citizenship and religion.

b. In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with students and teachers to dig deeper into their understanding and experiences of the learning materials on the history of the heroes' struggle and STEM-R. In-depth interviews were conducted individually with several selected students, as well as interviews with teachers to find out how the implementation of this teaching module affected students' understanding of the history material and the values taught. Several questions in the interviews focused on students' understanding of the heroes' struggle, the application of the values of struggle in everyday life, and the changes they felt after participating in learning with an inquiry approach and STEM-R.

c. Documentation

The researcher also collected documents of students' work, such as reflection assignments and action plans that they had created as part of the learning activities. These documents were used to analyze how students reflected on the material that had been learned and to what extent they applied the values of the heroes' struggle in their lives.

d. Student Worksheets (LKPD)

The researcher reviewed the results of the LKPD completed by students as part of the reflection and action plan assignments given. This LKPD serves to measure the extent to which students can relate the values of the heroes' struggle to their lives, and how much they apply these values in real actions.

Data collected through observation, interviews, and documents were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This analysis process involves the following steps:

a. Data Transcription

Interview data obtained from students and teachers were transcribed verbatim to ensure that each statement and answer was recorded accurately. These interview transcripts became the main source in identifying the main themes that emerged.

b. Data Coding

After data transcription was completed, the researcher coded the data to identify themes that were relevant to students' understanding of the heroes' struggles and civic engagement. Each theme that emerged was identified and labeled to facilitate the analysis process.

c. Compilation of Themes and Categories

The identified themes were then grouped into main categories related to the application of STEM-R in learning. These categories include aspects of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Religion, as well as how the integration of these elements helps students understand the heroes' struggles and apply these values.

d. Conclusion and Interpretation

The analyzed data are concluded and interpreted to describe how the inquiry-based learning module with STEM-R integration contributes to the understanding and application of the values of the heroes' struggle by students. This conclusion also includes reflection on civic engagement that develops among students as a result of the learning.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study uses several strategies, including:

- Triangulation: Using multiple data sources (observations, interviews, documents) to compare results and ensure consistency of findings.
- Member Checking: Some interview results and initial findings from observations will be checked again with students and teachers to ensure that the interpretation of the data is accurate.
- Researcher Reflection: The researcher openly records reflections and biases that may have emerged during the data collection and analysis process to maintain objectivity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Context and Initial Challenges in History Learning

This research was conducted in one Islamic elementary school (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) with 35 fifth-grade students. The school is characterized by the implementation of a religion-based curriculum. However, in the context of learning about the history of heroes' struggles, students faced several challenges. A key issue observed was the low level of enthusiasm among students for the material, resulting in limited understanding of the historical narratives. Students mostly memorized the names of national heroes without grasping the deeper values behind their struggles. This indicates a pedagogical gap in linking historical content to students' daily realities.

2. Implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning with STEM-R Integration

To address these challenges, the teaching module was designed using an inquiry-based approach integrated with STEM-R (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Religion). This method was employed to contextualize historical content and enhance its relevance to students' lives. For example, science was linked to the use of medicinal plants by heroes, technology to the use of communication tools like telegraphs and semaphores, engineering to the creation of simple defense models, mathematics to the calculation of distances traveled by freedom fighters, and religion to

values like sacrifice and faith. This integrative approach made history more engaging and meaningful for students.

3. Student Engagement and Participation

Initial classroom observations revealed limited participation, with only around five students actively contributing during discussions. After the STEM-R module implementation, the level of participation increased significantly, with 25 out of 35 students actively involved. Students began to relate historical events to modern technologies and religious values. For example, one student articulated how semaphores were used for wartime communication and reflected on how faith motivated heroes to fight. This shift in engagement highlighted the effectiveness of contextualized, inquiry-driven learning.

4. Development of Civic Engagement and Character Building

One of the core goals of the intervention was to cultivate civic engagement among students. Students were asked to create action plans inspired by the values of national heroes. Reflections indicated that many students internalized values such as mutual cooperation, bravery, and social responsibility. For instance, students committed to helping classmates with their studies or participating in school-based social service activities. These actions represent early forms of civic behavior, rooted in historical and religious moral frameworks.

5. Reflection Assignments and Student Outcomes

Reflection and action plan tasks further illustrated variations in students' understanding. Students who were more involved in discussions and practical activities demonstrated deeper connections between hero values and their lives. For example, Student 1 chose Sultan Agung and connected his struggle to values of sacrifice and sincerity in Islam. In contrast, less engaged students struggled to connect historical content with actionable values, indicating a gap in the internalization process that requires sustained support and personalization.

6. Teacher Insights and Observations

Two fifth-grade teachers were interviewed to gather insights on the module's impact. Both affirmed that the integration of STEM-R made learning more practical, engaging, and value-driven. They observed improvements in students' civic attitudes, such as helping peers and engaging in collective school activities. However, they also noted the need for continuous support to help some students bridge the gap between understanding and application.

7. Student Perspectives and Meaningful Learning

Student interviews reinforced the observed patterns. Active students reported that learning became more enjoyable and meaningful when linked to experiments and real-life applications. For example, designing communication tools made them appreciate the technological ingenuity of heroes. Others appreciated how religious values gave deeper meaning to the struggle. These reflections show that students began to internalize and apply values such as perseverance and cooperation.

8. Analysis of Understanding Gaps and Implications

Despite the overall improvement, there remained a gap between students who fully grasped the significance of the heroes' values and those who did not. These differences were associated with students' levels of participation, motivation, and prior engagement. To close this gap, future instruction should adopt more personalized learning strategies and increase opportunities for hands-on, socially relevant learning.

9. Empirical Contribution and Practical Implications

This study contributes empirically by demonstrating how history learning, when integrated with STEM-R and inquiry approaches, fosters both cognitive understanding and civic engagement in primary school students. It offers a model for Islamic-based schools to make value-based history learning more engaging and applicable. Practically, this approach supports educators in designing interdisciplinary lessons that not only convey knowledge but also cultivate moral and civic responsibilities.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The integration of STEM-R in inquiry-based history learning positively impacts students' understanding of national heroes' struggles and enhances their civic engagement. While challenges remain in ensuring equitable comprehension across all students, this approach shows promise in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-life application. Future efforts should focus on sustained, contextual learning with greater emphasis on reflective and social-action-oriented tasks. It is also recommended that learning designs include:

- Regular follow-up activities to reinforce values learned.
- Stronger collaboration between teachers and parents to support civic actions at home.
- Use of locally relevant hero figures to increase relatability.
- Continuous assessment that combines cognitive, affective, and social engagement indicators.

This will help ensure that the goals of character education and civic engagement are consistently achieved and internalized by all students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted in grade 5 of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah using inquiry-based teaching modules integrated with STEM-R, it can be concluded that learning the history of heroes' struggles significantly enhances students' understanding of historical content while fostering civic engagement values. Students move beyond rote memorization of facts to meaningfully connect values such as courage, sacrifice, mutual cooperation, and steadfastness of faith to their everyday experiences. Through hands-on activities that combine Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Religion, students become more active, creative, and motivated to apply these heroic values in real-life actions.

This study implies that the integration of STEM-R into history education not only makes learning more engaging and relevant, but also serves as an effective approach to character and civic education in Islamic elementary schools. It encourages educators to adopt interdisciplinary strategies that link historical knowledge with moral and social values to foster responsible citizenship from an early age.

However, this study is not without limitations. The research was conducted in a single school with a limited number of participants, which may affect the generalizability

of the findings. Moreover, while improvements were observed, there remained disparities in students' ability to internalize and apply the values learned, indicating the need for a more personalized and sustained instructional approach. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of study to multiple contexts, apply longitudinal designs, and explore deeper interventions that support diverse learning needs in fostering civic engagement through historical learning.

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