

BETWEEN LIKING AND DISLIKING STUDENTS: A TEACHER'S INNOVATION

¹Nabila Muna Mufidah, ²Aramudin

Universitas Islam Negri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau,

nabilamufidah392@gmail.com¹, aramudin@uin-suska.ac.id²

ABSTRAK

Social Studies (IPS) learning at the elementary school level often faces challenges related to low student interest and engagement, leading to the phenomenon of “learning dislike.” This is mainly due to less innovative, monotonous teaching methods. This study aims to examine how teachers apply innovative strategies to avoid this phenomenon and increase student interest in IPS lessons. Using a qualitative case-study Design, this study involved SSE teachers and students at SDIT Fadhilah. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, which were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The primary focus of this study was on the application of project-based learning (PjBL) and problem-based learning (PBL) methods, as well as the use of technology to support the learning process. The findings of this study indicate that these methods can reduce students’ disinterest in the subject and increase their engagement in social studies learning. However, challenges related to time constraints and access to technology need to be addressed in the implementation of these innovative strategies. This study is expected to provide insights into developing more engaging and relevant learning experiences for students at SDIT Fadhilah and other elementary schools.

Keywords: Teacher Strategies, Learning Styles and Dislikes, Integrated Social Studies

INTRODUCTION

Social Studies (IPS) learning at the elementary school level plays a vital role in shaping students’ understanding of society, the environment, history, and social dynamics. However, many students respond poorly to this subject because the material is considered abstract or irrelevant to their daily lives, or because the teaching methods are monotonous, resulting in low interest, motivation, and engagement in SSE learning. For example, studies show that monotonous learning media in SSE negatively impact student motivation, participation, and understanding (Daryanti & Ningsih, 2025).

The problems of low student interest and motivation, passive involvement, and the tendency for students to “dislike” or “be less interested” in social studies learning have become a phenomenon: it is not merely a deficiency in the material or curriculum, but rather a failure to “deliver” the material in a way that suits the character and preferences of students. In many elementary schools, the learning approach remains conventional: lectures, teacher explanations, and slight variation in media. This makes social studies lessons often perceived

as boring, so that students may be physically present but mentally “off” (Rahmat & Lestari, 2023).

The concepts of learning likes and learning dislikes can be explained through the approach of affective involvement and contemporary learning motivation. The theory of student engagement views attitudes of liking or disliking learning as part of affective involvement, which includes students’ interest, emotions, and sense of connection with learning activities (Fredricks et al., 2016; OECD, 2023). This affective engagement plays an important role in determining students’ participation, perseverance, and learning success, especially in learning that requires collaborative and contextual activities.

In addition, motivation and self-regulated learning theories emphasize that positive emotional responses to learning methods encourage self-regulation, persistence, and more adaptive learning strategies. In contrast, negative affective responses tend to reduce student engagement and academic performance (Zimmerman, 2022). Thus, students’ preferences for learning methods cannot be understood merely as a matter of taste, but rather as a strategic psychopedagogical factor that directly influences the overall effectiveness of learning.

Referring to modern pedagogical theory and practice, the use of innovative strategies in learning, such as interactive methods, project-based learning (PjBL), the use of visual or digital media, contextual learning, and cooperative approaches, is considered capable of accommodating the diversity of students’ learning styles, increasing active engagement, and making the material more relevant and meaningful (Amalia, 2025). In the context of social studies, when teachers apply such innovative strategies, students do not just “listen” but actively think, discuss, explore, and connect the material to their real lives. This can be a ‘lifesaver’ so that social studies is not just considered a “school assignment” but a lively, engaging, and valuable lesson (Du Jin & Faridah Ibrahim, 2024).

Several empirical studies support this view. For example, recent research shows that the use of interactive methods in elementary school students increases motivation and engagement in learning (Siti Nurhidayati, 2023). Another study found that teacher strategies using PjBL in social studies in elementary school can significantly increase student enthusiasm, understanding, and engagement (Nugroho & Pratiwi, 2023). However, most of these studies focus on aspects of conceptual understanding, learning outcomes, or general motivation, with few explicitly examining the phenomenon of student preferences for learning

methods/patterns (whether students “like” or ‘dislike’ a method), which I refer to as “learning likes and dislikes.” This is a significant gap in the literature because students’ method preferences can strongly influence learning effectiveness, long-term engagement, and attitudes toward the subject.

Furthermore, much research has been conducted on public elementary schools. At the same time, few studies have explored the context of Islamic-based elementary schools or schools such as SDIT Fadhilah, where student characteristics, school values, and learning environments may differ. This condition opens a research gap: a lack of studies linking innovative teaching strategies to efforts to address students’ “dislike” of social studies learning methods in Islamic elementary schools (Ali, 2024).

In the context of Islamic-based elementary schools such as SDIT, the learning approach needs to align with the paradigm of holistic character development and social-emotional learning. Education is no longer understood as limited to cognitive mastery, but as a process of developing students’ values, social attitudes, spirituality, and moral awareness in an integrated manner. The OECD Education 2030 framework emphasizes that meaningful learning must foster core values, empathy, social responsibility, and reflective abilities so that students can become individuals with character and morals in social life (OECD, 2019).

Therefore, this study offers novelty value. By emphasizing students’ preferences (like vs. dislikes) for social studies teaching methods and examining how teachers can develop innovative strategies to minimize dislikes and maximize likes, this study can fill an academic void while providing practical recommendations. Given the changing times, with many distractions and students’ learning styles now different from those of the past, an innovative and responsive approach to student character is becoming increasingly important (Akhtar, 2025).

The urgency of this research is also high: the results are not only relevant to educational theory and pedagogical development, but also to actual practice in schools, especially elementary schools with religious backgrounds or exceptional values such as SDIT Fadhilah. By understanding students’ preferences for methods, teachers can Design social studies instruction that is more effective, enjoyable, and sustainable (Yunita, 2024).

Based on this background, the objectives of this study are to describe students’ preferences for social studies learning methods (like vs. dislike), identify innovative strategies

that teachers can apply to reduce dislike, and analyze the effect of applying these strategies on students' motivation, engagement, and understanding in social studies, thereby producing concrete recommendations for teachers and schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Studies Learning

Social studies learning in elementary schools integrates social science concepts to develop students' understanding of society, the environment, and social dynamics (Amalia, 2025). Social studies not only focuses on mastering material but also on shaping students' character, social values, and civic awareness. However, social studies learning often faces challenges, including low student interest and motivation, due to monotonous teaching methods that are not relevant to students' daily lives (Daryanti & Ningsih, 2025).

The Concepts of Learning Likes and Learning Dislikes

The phenomena of learning like and learning dislike can be understood through the affective engagement approach in student engagement theory. Fredricks et al. (2016) define affective engagement as a dimension that includes students' interest, emotions, and sense of connection to learning activities. This affective engagement plays a crucial role in determining students' participation, perseverance, and learning success, especially in learning that requires collaborative and contextual activities (OECD, 2023).

Theories of motivation and self-regulated learning assert that positive emotional responses to learning methods encourage self-regulation, persistence, and more adaptive learning strategies (Zimmerman, 2022). Conversely, negative affective responses tend to reduce student engagement and academic performance. Thus, student preferences for learning methods are not merely a matter of taste, but rather a strategic psychopedagogical factor that directly influences learning effectiveness.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

PjBL is a pedagogical approach that positions students as active subjects in learning through the completion of contextual, meaningful projects. Kokotsaki et al. (2021) state that PjBL effectively increases student engagement by allowing them to explore fundamental problems, collaborate with peers, and produce authentic learning products. This approach aligns with the contemporary constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes that knowledge is

constructed through direct experience, reflection, and social interaction in real contexts (Schunk, 2020).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

PBL is a student-centered learning strategy that uses complex problems as stimuli for learning. Al-Balushi and Al-Aamri (2022) found that PBL not only improves conceptual understanding but also develops critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. Hmelo-Silver and Jeong (2021) added that PBL facilitates deep learning because students are actively involved in the inquiry, analysis, and reflection processes.

Integration of Technology in Learning

The use of digital technology in social studies learning has been shown to increase student interest and engagement. Harris and Hofer (2022) state that technology enables multimodal learning that accommodates diverse student learning styles. Yunita (2024) found that integrating digital media into social studies learning in elementary schools can create a more interactive, visual, and engaging learning experience, thereby reducing boredom and increasing students' motivation to learn.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative case study Design, which allows researchers to explore in depth the phenomena occurring at SDIT Fadhilah related to the application of innovative strategies in social studies learning. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the perceptions, experiences, and meanings constructed by teachers and students in the context of social studies learning in natural, contextual settings (Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2021).

The use of a case study Design is relevant because the research focuses on the specific context of the educational unit, allowing researchers to obtain an in-depth picture of the process of implementing innovative learning strategies and their impact on students' interests and preferences for social studies (Arikunto, 2019; Fitrah & Luthfiyah, 2017). This approach enables a holistic understanding of the learning phenomenon under study.

This research Design is a descriptive qualitative Design that aims to describe in detail the implementation of innovative learning methods and their implications for phenomena such as students' liking and disliking of learning. The qualitative descriptive approach

emphasizes presenting data in a narrative form based on field findings, thereby revealing the dynamics of learning and student engagement in depth (Nassaji, 2015; Rukajat, 2018).

The population in this study includes all social studies teachers and students at SDIT Fadhilah. The research sample will be selected using purposive sampling, with social studies teachers who actively teach at the school and students involved in social studies learning using innovative strategies, such as project-based learning (PjBL) or problem-based learning (PBL), as the primary informants. The selection of this sample aims to obtain relevant information about their experiences with social studies learning and students' preferences for the methods used. The data collection techniques used in this study are in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews will be conducted with social studies teachers and several selected students to explore their understanding of the application of innovative strategies and their influence on student interest and motivation to learn. Participatory observation will be conducted to directly observe the social studies learning process in the classroom, focusing on the use of innovative methods and student responses to such learning. In addition, the researcher will collect documentation, such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and learning projects, used by teachers to understand how innovative strategies are applied in authentic contexts.

The instruments used in this study include interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists. The interview guidelines will include open-ended questions to explore teachers' and students' views on innovative strategies in social studies learning and their impact on student interest and preferences. Observation sheets will be used to record teacher and student activities during the learning process. In contrast, documentation checklists will be used to collect information related to teaching materials and lesson plans implemented by teachers. After the data is collected, thematic analysis techniques will be used to identify patterns or themes that emerge from interviews, observations, and documentation. The analysis process begins with Reading the interview transcripts and observation notes, then identifying the main themes related to the application of innovative strategies, student interest, and factors that influence social studies learning. In addition, to ensure data validity, researchers will use data triangulation by comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation to assess the consistency and accuracy of the information obtained.

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the research, the researcher will conduct member checking, which involves asking informants to confirm the findings obtained from interviews and observations. By conducting member checking, the researcher can ensure that the data collected accurately reflects the experiences and views of the informants. Researchers will also ensure that the data collection and analysis processes are carried out systematically and transparently, so that the research findings are accountable. Overall, this methodology is designed to provide a deeper understanding of the application of innovative strategies in social studies learning at SDIT Fadhilah, as well as practical recommendations for other teachers and schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on interviews with social studies teachers and classroom observations, most teachers have implemented project-based learning (PjBL), problem-based learning (PBL), and digital technology to make social studies learning more engaging and relevant to students' lives. Teachers believe that these methods help students more easily connect lessons to their real-life experiences. For example, one social studies teacher, Mr. Ahmad, revealed that, using the PjBL method, students have the opportunity to learn about local culture through field trips, which makes them more enthusiastic about participating in lessons. Students who are directly involved in such activities feel more connected to the material and are more excited about the learning process because they can see the direct relevance between the theory they are learning and the real world.

The results of the observation also show that almost all students feel more interested in social studies after the implementation of this innovative method. Project-based learning allows students to work in groups, discuss, and solve problems together, which makes them more active and involved in the learning process. Most students feel that social studies has become more enjoyable and less boring because they can see the direct application of the knowledge they have learned. However, although the majority of students responded positively to this approach, some found the more open, less structured learning method difficult and therefore felt more comfortable with more conventional learning. This shows that although innovative strategies have a positive impact in general, some students who are more accustomed to traditional methods need time to adapt.

Furthermore, this study also identified several factors that influence students' preferences and interests in social studies learning. The three main factors identified were the material's relevance to real life, active student involvement in the learning process, and technological support. Students tend to be more interested in social studies lessons that are relevant to their daily lives. When material about culture or history is taught through field activities or project-based research, students feel more connected and enthusiastic. In addition, the use of technology in learning is an important factor in helping students understand the material in more engaging and interactive ways. The use of videos, educational applications, and online learning platforms provides variety in teaching methods, making social studies lessons less monotonous and, in turn, reducing students' disinterest. Most students consider technology a fun tool that makes it easier for them to understand the material in a more visual, practical way.

Based on interview and observation results, it can be concluded that the implementation of innovative learning methods, such as PjBL and PBL, has successfully reduced the phenomenon of "learning dislike" among students, as they feel more engaged in interactive, relevant learning. Students who previously felt less interested in social studies reported enjoying learning more when they could actively participate in activities directly related to the topics they were studying. However, a small number of students found it challenging to adapt to project-based learning, as they preferred structured instruction that went straight to the core of the material with slight variation. Other obstacles included the limited time available to complete field-based projects and technology that was sometimes inaccessible to all students. Some teachers also revealed that although innovative learning has a positive impact, they face challenges in managing limited time and resources to maximize these methods.

Overall, the results of this study show that despite the challenges in implementing innovative learning, the positive impact on student interest and engagement is very noticeable. Project-based and problem-based social studies learning has proven effective in increasing student engagement and reducing disinterest in the subject. The researchers recommend that schools continue to support the implementation of these innovative strategies by providing further training to teachers, improving students' access to technology, and adjusting the time

available to complete projects to enable more effective completion, so that all students can be actively involved in enjoyable and meaningful learning.

Discussion

Based on the findings, the use of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) methods has been proven effective in reducing disinterest or learning dislike towards social studies lessons. Students showed higher levels of engagement and enthusiasm when allowed to work on projects directly related to their real lives, as learning became more contextual and meaningful (Kokotsaki et al., 2021; Al-Balushi & Al-Aamri, 2022).

Student involvement in contextual projects, such as exploring local culture through field observation activities and presenting findings, enables meaningful learning centered on authentic student experiences (Kokotsaki et al., 2021). This approach aligns with contemporary constructivism, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through direct experience, reflection, and social interaction in authentic learning contexts (Schunk, 2020; Sugrah, 2020).

The implementation of PjBL and PBL not only improves students' conceptual understanding but also develops social, collaborative, and critical thinking skills, which are key competencies for 21st-century learning and modern social studies learning (OECD, 2021; Hmelo-Silver & Jeong, 2021). Therefore, social studies learning becomes livelier, more relevant, and more contextual, thereby reducing students' tendency to dislike social studies.

Furthermore, technological support is an important factor in increasing students' interest in social studies. The use of educational videos, educational applications, and online learning platforms helps students understand the material in more interactive, visual ways. Technology allows teachers to introduce material in more varied and interesting ways, which can overcome the boredom that may arise with traditional methods. For example, in some lessons, students use applications to explore more information about the topics they are learning, which makes social studies learning more relevant and enjoyable. The theory of multimodal learning also supports these findings, which state that the use of various media types in learning can increase student engagement and help them understand the material more comprehensively.

However, this study also identified several challenges in implementing this innovative strategy. One of the main challenges is the limited time available to complete field-based

projects or research. Project-based learning requires more time, while busy lesson schedules sometimes force teachers to reduce the duration or quality of these activities. In addition, limited access to technology is also a significant obstacle in some classrooms, as not all students have equal access to the digital devices and internet connection needed to support technology-based learning. This shows that although innovative strategies have a lot of potential, fair access to resources and sufficient time need to be considered so that all students can benefit from this learning approach.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that innovative strategies, such as PjBL, PBL, and the use of digital technology, are highly effective in increasing students' interest and engagement in social studies learning. Project-based learning allows students to learn in a more practical, relevant way, while technology provides a refreshing variety in the learning process. Despite challenges related to time and access to technology, the results of this study suggest that schools should continue to innovate in their teaching methods, provide more intensive teacher training, and improve their technological infrastructure. With these steps, social studies learning will become more interesting and enjoyable, and can reduce the phenomenon of "learning dislike" that often occurs in this subject.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the application of innovative strategies in social studies learning at SDIT Fadhilah, such as project-based learning (PjBL), problem-based learning (PBL), and the use of digital technology, is very effective in increasing student interest and engagement. These innovative methods successfully reduce disinterest or "learning dislike" often encountered in social studies learning, as they provide opportunities for students to learn practically, in ways that are relevant to their lives, and to be directly involved in the learning process.

Project-based and problem-based learning enable students to actively collaborate, connect theory with real-world practice, and strengthen their social and critical thinking skills. The use of technology also plays an important role in increasing student engagement, as it allows students to access a variety of interactive, engaging learning resources. Thus, social studies learning becomes livelier, more contextual, and more interesting for students. Although most students respond positively to this approach, some who are accustomed to

more structured, organized methods have difficulty adapting to project-based learning. This shows the need for flexibility in the approach used to meet students' diverse learning styles.

Although this innovative strategy has had a positive impact, several challenges remain, including time constraints and limited access to adequate technology. Time constraints for implementing field-based projects and unequal access to technology for all students are obstacles that need to be overcome. Therefore, to increase the effectiveness of this innovative strategy, greater efforts are needed to provide supporting infrastructure and further train teachers.

Overall, this study suggests that to reduce the phenomenon of "learning dislike" and improve the quality of social studies learning, schools and teachers need to continue developing innovative learning methods, support the use of technology in the classroom, and pay more attention to time management and resource access. Thus, social studies learning will be more enjoyable, relevant, and effective in increasing student interest and motivation.

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