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Social Studies Learning as a Means of Transforming Students' Social Sensitivity: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aimed to examine the influence of Social Studies learning on students' social sensitivity, particularly in developing empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, and mutual respect among junior high school students through effective and interactive classroom learning processes within the educational environment.

Methodology: This study employed a quantitative associative research design involving 30 junior high school students selected through total sampling techniques. Data were collected using observation sheets, questionnaires, and documentation methods. Research instruments applied a Likert scale measurement model. Data analysis included normality tests, heteroscedasticity tests, simple linear regression, coefficient determination, and hypothesis testing using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software.

Main Findings: The findings indicated that Social Studies learning had a positive and significant influence on students' social sensitivity. Students demonstrated good levels of empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, and mutual respect during the learning process. Regression analysis showed a significance value of 0.000 and a coefficient determination value of 87.2%, indicating that Social Studies learning substantially contributed to improving students' social sensitivity within the school environment.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study highlights social sensitivity as the primary outcome of Social Studies learning using a quantitative associative approach. Unlike previous studies emphasizing cognitive achievement, this research focuses on the transformation of students' social character through Social Studies learning. The study also provides empirical evidence regarding the contribution of Social Studies learning to strengthening students' interpersonal awareness and social behavior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in shaping students' character and personality as part of social life in society. Through the educational process, students are not only directed to acquire academic knowledge but are also guided to develop positive social attitudes [1], [2]. One important aspect that needs to be developed in

education is students' social sensitivity toward their surrounding environment. Social sensitivity reflects an individual's ability to understand, appreciate, and respond positively to social conditions [3], [4]. In this context, Social Studies learning has a strategic role because it contains social, humanitarian, cooperative, and environmental values.

The development of modern life and technological advancement have influenced students' patterns of social interaction. Many students tend to display individualistic attitudes, show less concern for their surroundings, and experience difficulties in building positive social interactions [5]. Phenomena such as bullying, low levels of tolerance among peers, and the formation of exclusive social groups at school indicate a decline in students' social sensitivity [6], [7]. These conditions demonstrate that students have not fully implemented social values in their daily lives. If this situation continues, the development of students' social character will gradually deteriorate.

Previous studies have shown that Social Studies learning is closely related to the development of students' social character. Earlier research generally emphasized the influence of Social Studies learning on students' social attitudes, cooperation, and social awareness within the school environment. In addition, several studies revealed that active learning methods in Social Studies can improve students' understanding of social issues [8], [9]. However, most previous studies focused more on cognitive learning outcomes rather than deeply examining the development of students' social sensitivity. This indicates that studies discussing Social Studies learning and the transformation of social sensitivity still require further exploration.

Although numerous studies on Social Studies learning have been conducted, research specifically discussing the transformation of students' social sensitivity through Social Studies learning remains limited. Most previous research primarily examined the effectiveness of learning methods without analyzing their impact on students' social behavior [10], [11]. Furthermore, studies employing quantitative approaches to measure the relationship between Social Studies learning and the improvement of social sensitivity are still relatively scarce. This condition demonstrates a research gap that needs to be explored more comprehensively [12], [13]. Therefore, further research is needed to explain how Social Studies learning contributes to the transformation of students' social sensitivity.

Research on students' social sensitivity is important because schools have a responsibility to shape the social character of younger generations. Social Studies learning can serve as a medium for instilling values such as empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and social responsibility among students [14], [15]. Good social sensitivity helps students establish harmonious social relationships both within the school environment and in society. In addition, strengthening social sensitivity is essential for addressing increasingly complex social challenges in the modern era [16]. Thus, Social Studies learning functions not only as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a medium for developing students' social character.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the transformation of students' social sensitivity through Social Studies learning using a quantitative approach. This study does not merely view Social Studies as an academic subject but also as a means of shaping students' social behavior [17]. Furthermore, this research positions social sensitivity as the main variable analyzed within the context of Social Studies learning at the junior high school level. This approach is expected to provide a new perspective regarding the contribution of Social Studies learning to the development of students' social character [18]. The findings of this study are also expected to serve as a reference for educators and schools in developing Social Studies learning that is more oriented toward strengthening students' social sensitivity.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative research design to examine the relationship between Social Studies learning and students' social sensitivity. Quantitative research was selected because it allows the researcher to analyze relationships between variables using statistical procedures [19], [20]. The study focused on identifying the extent to which Social Studies learning contributes to the transformation of students' social sensitivity. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 25 software. Through this approach, the research aimed to provide objective and measurable findings regarding the influence of Social Studies learning on students' social behavior.

2.2. Research Location and Participants

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 33 Barru over approximately two months after obtaining official research permission from the institution. The population of this study consisted of all eighth-grade students enrolled at the school. Since the total population was relatively small, all 30 students were selected as the research sample using a total sampling technique. The participants were considered appropriate because they

were actively involved in the Social Studies learning process. The use of total sampling enabled the researcher to obtain more comprehensive data related to students' social sensitivity.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participant Category	Total
Eighth-Grade Students	30
Total Sample	30

2.3. Data Collection and Research Instruments

Data collection in this study was conducted through observation, questionnaires, and documentation techniques. Observation was used to identify students' social interactions and classroom learning activities during the Social Studies learning process. The questionnaire served as the primary research instrument and consisted of statements related to Social Studies learning and students' social sensitivity. The instrument indicators for Social Studies learning included material delivery, students' understanding, and classroom participation, while the social sensitivity indicators included empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, and mutual respect [21]. Responses were measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4 to obtain quantitative data regarding students' perceptions and behaviors.

Table 2. Research Variables and Indicators

Variables	Indicators
Social Studies Learning (X)	Material delivery, understanding, learning participation
Social Sensitivity (Y)	Empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, respect

2.4. Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the assistance of SPSS version 25. Before conducting hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests including normality and heteroscedasticity tests were carried out to ensure the validity of the regression model. The normality test used the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method with a significance level of 0.05. Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the influence of Social Studies learning on students' social sensitivity. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test to identify whether Social Studies learning significantly affected the transformation of students' social sensitivity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Implementation of Social Studies Learning

The findings showed that the implementation of Social Studies learning was generally categorized as good based on students' responses toward the learning process. The assessment of Social Studies learning was measured through several indicators, including material delivery, students' understanding of the material, and classroom participation during the learning process. Most students responded positively to the teacher's explanation and demonstrated active involvement during classroom activities. Students were also able to understand the learning materials properly through discussions, questions, and interactive learning activities. These findings indicate that the Social Studies learning process was carried out effectively and encouraged students to participate actively in classroom interaction.

Table 3. Descriptive Results of Social Studies Learning

Indicators	Dominant Category	Percentage
Material Delivery	Good	43%
Material Understanding	Good	43%
Learning Participation	Very Good	60%

Based on Table 3, the highest percentage was found in students' participation during the learning process, which was categorized as "Very Good" with a percentage of 60%. This finding demonstrates that students showed enthusiasm and active engagement during Social Studies learning activities. Meanwhile, material delivery and students' understanding were both dominated by the "Good" category. The findings suggest that interactive learning methods positively influenced students' involvement and comprehension during

classroom instruction. Therefore, effective Social Studies learning can encourage active participation and meaningful learning experiences among students.



Figure 1. Students' Participation in Social Studies Learning

3.2. Students' Social Sensitivity

Students' social sensitivity was measured through indicators consisting of empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, and mutual respect. The results revealed that most students demonstrated positive social attitudes during social interaction within the school environment. Students showed empathy by helping classmates, appreciating others' achievements, and cooperating during classroom activities. In addition, students demonstrated social awareness and self-awareness through positive communication and responsible behavior during learning activities. These findings indicate that students possessed relatively good levels of social sensitivity in their daily interactions at school.

Table 4. Descriptive Results of Students' Social Sensitivity

Indicators	Dominant Category	Percentage
Empathy	Good	40%
Social Awareness	Good	40%
Self-Awareness	Good	43%
Mutual Respect	Good	40%

Table 4 shows that all indicators of students' social sensitivity were predominantly categorized as "Good." The highest percentage was found in the self-awareness indicator with a percentage of 43%. This finding demonstrates that students were able to recognize their responsibilities and maintain positive relationships with their peers. Furthermore, empathy and mutual respect were also reflected in students' willingness to support and appreciate one another during learning activities. Therefore, students' social sensitivity can be considered an important social outcome developed through Social Studies learning.

3.3. The Influence of Social Studies Learning on Students' Social Sensitivity

The influence of Social Studies learning on students' social sensitivity was analyzed using simple linear regression analysis with the assistance of SPSS version 25. Before conducting the hypothesis test, the data met the classical assumption requirements, including normality and heteroscedasticity tests. The regression analysis showed that Social Studies learning had a positive and significant influence on students' social sensitivity. This finding indicates that better implementation of Social Studies learning contributes to higher levels of empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, and mutual respect among students. Thus, Social Studies learning can function as an important educational medium for strengthening students' social character and interpersonal awareness.

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Variables	B	t	Sig.
Constant	0.050	0.234	0.817
Social Studies Learning	0.950	13.810	0.000

Based on Table 5, the significance value was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05, indicating that the proposed hypothesis was accepted. In addition, the calculated t-value (13.810) was higher than the t-table value (2.048), confirming that Social Studies learning significantly influenced students' social sensitivity. The positive regression coefficient value (0.950) indicates that improvements in Social Studies learning were followed by increases in students' social sensitivity. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination revealed that Social Studies learning contributed 87.2% to students' social sensitivity, while the remaining 12.8% was influenced by other external variables. These findings demonstrate that Social Studies learning plays a substantial role in transforming students' social sensitivity within the educational environment.

The findings of this study revealed that Social Studies learning was generally categorized as good based on students' responses toward material delivery, material understanding, and classroom participation. Students demonstrated active participation during the learning process through discussion activities, asking questions, and

responding to the teacher's explanations. Learning activities also encouraged students to become more engaged in collaborative interactions with their peers during classroom instruction. In addition, the findings showed that students possessed relatively good levels of social sensitivity reflected through empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, and mutual respect. These results indicate that Social Studies learning contributes not only to cognitive development but also to the strengthening of students' social character within the school environment.

Statistical analysis further demonstrated that Social Studies learning had a positive and significant influence on students' social sensitivity. This finding was supported by the regression analysis result showing a significance value lower than 0.05 and a high regression coefficient value. The coefficient of determination also indicated that Social Studies learning contributed substantially to the improvement of students' social sensitivity. Results imply that effective Social Studies learning can strengthen students' empathy, cooperation, responsibility, and respect toward others. Therefore, Social Studies learning can function as an educational medium that supports the development of students' social behavior and interpersonal awareness.

Findings of this study are consistent with previous studies which reported that Social Studies learning plays an important role in shaping students' social attitudes and social awareness. Earlier studies emphasized that Social Studies learning encourages students to understand social problems, cooperate with others, and develop empathy within social interactions [22], [23]. Several researchers also found that interactive learning activities positively influence students' participation and social responsibility during classroom learning. Present findings strengthen these arguments by showing that Social Studies learning contributes significantly to students' social sensitivity in the context of junior high school education [24], [25]. Thus, results of this study support the argument that Social Studies learning is closely associated with the development of students' social character.

Novelty of this study lies in its focus on the transformation of students' social sensitivity through Social Studies learning using a quantitative associative approach. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on cognitive learning outcomes, this research specifically examined social sensitivity as the primary research variable [26], [27]. Study also emphasized the role of Social Studies learning as a medium for strengthening empathy, self-awareness, social awareness, and mutual respect among students. Furthermore, this research provides empirical evidence regarding the strong contribution of Social Studies learning to students' social development [28], [29]. Consequently, the study offers a broader perspective on the importance of Social Studies learning in character education within the school environment.

Findings of this study have important implications for teachers, schools, and educational practices. Teachers are encouraged to implement more interactive and student-centered learning approaches in Social Studies classes to strengthen students' social sensitivity [30]. Schools may also integrate social values such as empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect into classroom learning activities and school culture. In addition, Social Studies learning should not only focus on academic achievement but also prioritize students' social and emotional development [31], [32]. Consequently, strengthening Social Studies learning practices may contribute positively to the development of socially responsible and socially aware students.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered in future research. First, the study involved a relatively small sample consisting of only 30 students from one junior high school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the research relied primarily on questionnaire data, which may be influenced by students' subjective responses during the data collection process. Third, the study focused only on one independent variable, whereas students' social sensitivity may also be influenced by family, peer, and environmental factors [33], [34]. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, multiple schools, and additional variables to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding students' social sensitivity.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Social Studies learning has a positive and significant influence on students' social sensitivity, particularly in strengthening empathy, social awareness, self-awareness, and mutual respect among students. Findings revealed that effective learning implementation through interactive classroom activities and active student participation contributed to the development of positive social attitudes within the educational environment. Results of the regression analysis further confirmed that Social Studies learning plays an important role in shaping students' social character and interpersonal awareness. These findings are aligned with the objectives presented in the introduction, which emphasized the importance of Social Studies learning as a medium for developing students' social sensitivity amid contemporary social challenges. In addition, this study provides a broader understanding that Social Studies learning should not only focus on cognitive achievement but also prioritize students' social and emotional development as part of character education. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, different educational contexts, and additional variables in order to expand the application and development of research related to Social Studies learning and students' social sensitivity.

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