

Implementing Problem-Based Learning to Improve Social Skills and Social Studies Learning Outcomes among Seventh-Grade Students at SMPN 14 Madiun

Irvan Bintar Kalaha¹, Sudarmiani², Nurhadji³

^{1,2,3}Magister Pendidikan IPS, Universitas PGRI Madiun, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

An innovative instructional model is needed that can simultaneously integrate the development of social skills and improvements in learning outcomes. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Problem-based Learning (PBL) in Social Studies instruction to develop social skills and improve the learning outcomes of seventh-grade students at SMPN 14 Madiun. This study adopts a classroom action research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles. Data were collected through observation, testing, and documentation, then analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings indicate that implementing the PBL model improved students' social skills and learning outcomes. The class average score increased from 65.3 in the pre-cycle to 72.2 in Cycle I and 79.5 in Cycle II, with the learning mastery rate rising from 43.3% to 86.7%. Students' social skills also improved, with the proportion of students achieving good or very good social skills increasing from 26.7% in Cycle I to 93.3% in Cycle II, while the proportion of students in the sufficient category decreased from 73.3% to 6.7%. This study concludes that the PBL model is an effective instructional approach in Social Studies for enhancing students' learning outcomes and social skills.

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Corresponding Author:

Sudarmiani

Universitas PGRI Madiun, Madiun, Madiun

Email: aniwidjati@unipma.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in human life by providing broad insight and understanding of knowledge [1]. The current state of education demands a learning process that not only focuses on enhancing students' factual knowledge but also on developing their higher-order thinking skills [2]. Every individual in social life needs the ability to interact and adapt well with others. It is through these social relationships that individuals can grow both personally and socially [3]. In this context, schools serve as social

environments that enable students to learn how to interact, collaborate, and adapt to their surroundings.

Social skills are defined as an individual's ability to interact effectively and harmoniously with others, encompassing communication, collaboration, empathy, and conflict resolution [4]. In this research [5], it is argued that, to thrive in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, students must cultivate seven essential social skills: self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, a disposition to share and help others, collaborative ability, and strong communication skills. Social skills are an essential component of emotional intelligence, which includes the capacity to interact with others and build positive relationships [6]. In learning, social skills support classroom interaction, increase motivation, and contribute to improved learning outcomes. Students with strong social skills tend to participate more actively in discussions, collaborate effectively, and express their ideas with greater confidence.

Prior research has established a strong, positive, and significant relationship between social skills and learning outcomes. These findings suggest that social skills play an important role in supporting students' academic achievement, with higher social skills associated with better learning outcomes [7]. Furthermore, game-based learning methods have proven effective at enhancing students' social skills, particularly in communication, collaboration, empathy, and conflict resolution [8].

In practice, Social Studies (IPS) instruction in schools often remains teacher-centered, with the lecture method as the predominant approach. This condition causes students to be generally passive and insufficiently engaged in the learning process. Based on preliminary observations conducted in Class VII-A at SMPN 14 Madiun, 57% of students had not yet achieved learning mastery, with a class average score of 65.3, which remains below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. In addition, students' social skills were also found to be relatively low, as evidenced by difficulties in communicating, collaborating, respecting others' opinions, and completing group tasks effectively.

This reflects a notable gap between what 21st-century learning demands in terms of social skill development and the actual conditions found in classrooms that have yet to move beyond conventional teaching practices. An innovative instructional model is needed that can simultaneously integrate the development of social skills and improvements in learning outcomes [9]. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is considered effective in achieving these objectives, as it emphasizes students' active involvement in solving authentic problems through inquiry and collaborative investigation, thereby enhancing learning motivation, conceptual understanding, and social skills through active participation, peer collaboration, and idea expression [10].

Although numerous studies have demonstrated that PBL improves students' academic achievement and learning motivation, relatively few studies have simultaneously examined its effectiveness in enhancing both social skills and learning outcomes in Social Studies at the junior high school level. Furthermore, limited evidence is available from classroom action research conducted in authentic classroom settings, particularly in Indonesian public junior high schools. This gap provides the rationale for the present study.

The novelty of this study lies in the implementation of PBL to simultaneously develop students' social skills and improve learning outcomes in Social Studies through Classroom Action Research conducted in the authentic classroom context of Grade VII students at SMPN 14 Madiun.

Drawing from the preceding discussion, this study aims to analyze the implementation of PBL in Social Studies instruction to develop social skills and improve the learning outcomes of seventh-grade students at SMPN 14 Madiun. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How does the implementation of the PBL model improve students' social skills in Social Studies instruction? (2) How does the implementation of the PBL model improve students' Social Studies learning outcomes? This research is expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of effective instructional strategies and to serve as a reference for educators seeking to enhance the quality of learning.

2. METHOD

This study adopts a classroom action research (CAR) design, a research methodology carried out by teachers in their own classrooms through targeted interventions to improve and elevate the overall quality of the learning process. This design was selected because it aligns with the research objectives, namely to improve students' social skills and Social Studies learning outcomes through the implementation of the PBL instructional model.

The subjects of this study were 30 students from Class VII-A at SMPN 14 Madiun in the 2025/2026 academic year, comprising 14 male and 16 female students. The selection of research subjects was based on preliminary observations indicating that students' social skills and Social Studies learning outcomes still required improvement.

The study was conducted at SMPN 14 Madiun, located at Jalan Tulus Bakti No. 40, Taman Village, Taman District, Madiun City. The selection of this research site was based on preliminary observations revealing that students' social skills and Social Studies learning outcomes remained low. Furthermore, no similar research had previously been conducted at the school, so it is hoped that this study will provide a new contribution to improving the quality of learning. The research was conducted from March to August 2026, encompassing activities such as title submission, research proposal development, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of research findings.

The research materials Students' social skills were assessed based on four indicators: (1) communication, defined as the ability to express opinions, listen attentively, and respond politely during discussions; (2) cooperation, defined as the ability to work collaboratively within a group, share tasks, and contribute actively to group activities; (3) respect for others' opinions, defined as the ability to accept differing viewpoints without interrupting others during discussions; and (4) social responsibility, defined as the ability to complete group tasks on time and comply with group rules and norms. This instrument underwent content validity testing by two expert validators. The results indicated that all items were rated as relevant, yielding a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 1.00, with feasibility scores of 92.86% and 96.42% from the first and second validators, respectively.

Based on the criteria of Guilford and Fruchter (1978), these results were classified as very high, indicating that the instrument demonstrated excellent content validity and was appropriate for measuring students' social skills in this study.

Students' learning outcomes were measured using a test consisting of 10 multiple-choice items and 5 essay questions, covering the Social Studies material taught in each Cycle. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients of 0.719 for the multiple-choice items and 0.713 for the essay items. Based on the criteria of Guilford and Fruchter (1978), both coefficients fall into the high category, indicating that the test instrument was reliable for measuring students' learning outcomes in this study.

The data collection techniques employed in this study consisted of observation, testing, and documentation :

- a) Observation was used to collect data on student and teacher activities and students' social skills throughout the learning process, using observation sheets developed based on the research indicators described above.
- b) Tests were administered at the end of each Cycle to measure students' Social Studies learning outcomes after the PBL model was applied, with each test comprising 10 multiple-choice and 5 essay questions.
- c) Documentation was used to supplement the research data, comprising teaching modules, student grade lists, photographs of learning activities, and other relevant documents.

The research was conducted in two cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II, with each Cycle consisting of the following stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection [11].

a) Planning

During the planning stage, the researcher prepared Social Studies learning materials using the PBL model, including instructional materials, student activity observation sheets, teacher activity observation sheets, social skills observation sheets, and learning outcome evaluation questions. In Cycle II, planning was carried out as a follow-up to Cycle I reflections by refining the learning materials, arranging students into heterogeneous groups, and preparing a broader range of instructional media to enhance the learning process and ensure optimal achievement of the research objectives.

b) Acting

The action implementation was carried out in accordance with the steps of the PBL instructional model, as follows:

1. The teacher presented contextual problems to students related to the potential and utilization of Indonesia's natural resources.
2. The teacher organized students into learning groups. In Cycle II, groups were formed heterogeneously to optimize group collaboration.
3. Students conducted investigations, gathered information, and engaged in group discussions to solve the given problems. In Cycle II, the teacher provided more intensive guidance, enabling students to become more active and confident in the learning process.

4. Students formulated solutions and presented their results to the class. In Cycle II, presentations were delivered using digital media such as Canva and PowerPoint.
5. The teacher and students collaboratively reflected on the process and outcomes of the learning activities that had been carried out.

c) Observing

During the observation stage, the researcher conducted systematic observations of student activities, teacher activities, students' social skills, and student learning outcomes throughout the Social Studies learning process using the PBL model. Observations were conducted to assess students' participation, critical thinking, problem-solving, collaborative capacity, communication, and social interaction among group members during learning activities. In addition, student learning outcomes were assessed through end-of-cycle evaluations to determine improvements in students' content understanding, analytical ability, and academic achievement following the implementation of the PBL instructional model.

d) Reflecting

During the reflection stage, the researcher conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the entire learning process implemented, covering the planning, action implementation, and observation stages, as well as the learning evaluation results. Reflection was conducted to identify obstacles, weaknesses, and shortcomings that emerged during the implementation of the PBL instructional model, so they could serve as a basis for formulating improvements in the subsequent Cycle. In Cycle II, reflection was conducted to assess the implementation of the PBL model, the effectiveness of the learning process, and the extent to which the research objectives had been achieved. The results of the reflection were then used to determine the continuation of actions within the classroom action research.

The data analysis in this study consisted of quantitative and qualitative (descriptive) analyses:

a) Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis. Quantitative data were obtained from observation results and student learning outcome tests, analyzed using percentage and mean techniques to determine improvements in students' social skills and learning outcomes. This study was considered successful if students' social skills reached at least the good category and if learning outcomes met the predetermined mastery criteria, namely a minimum score of 75 for at least 85% of students. The calculation results were compared against a descriptive percentage criteria table comprising five categories, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Social Skills Assessment Criteria

13	Category	Score Range
1	Very Good	17–20
2	Good	13–16
3	Fair	9–12
4	Poor	5–8
5	Very Poor	1–4

The percentage of students in each category was calculated using the formula :

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

P : percentage

F : frequency of students in each category

N : total number of students.

The mean score was calculated using:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

M : Mean

$\sum X$: total score

N : total number of students

Table 2. Student Learning Outcome Mastery Criteria Based on Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC)

No.	Score Criteria	Category
1.	≥ 75	Mastery
2.	< 75	Not Mastery

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The minimum mastery criteria (MMC) applied in this study was 75.

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b) Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were obtained from observation results and documentation collected throughout the research process. Data analysis was carried out through three stages, namely:

1. Data reduction, which involves selecting and simplifying relevant data.
2. Data presentation involves systematically organizing data into descriptive narratives.
3. Conclusion drawing, which involves summarizing the research findings based on the data that have been analyzed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was implemented as a classroom action research involving Class VII-A students at SMPN 14 Madiun, conducted across two cycles. Cycle I took place on March 10, 2026 and Cycle II on March 31, 2026. Each Cycle progressed through the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The results reveal that both students' social skills and their Social Studies learning outcomes improved significantly when the PBL instructional model was applied.

3.1. Pre-Cycle Data

Based on the preliminary observation, Social Studies instruction in Class VII-A at SMPN 14 Madiun remained predominantly teacher-centered. The teacher mainly employed lecture and assignment methods, resulting in limited student participation during the learning process. Consequently, students' learning outcomes and social skills had not yet reached the expected level.

1 The pre-cycle learning outcome test showed that the class average score was 65.3, which was below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. Of the 30 students, only 13 students (43.3%) achieved learning mastery, while 17 students (56.7%) had not yet reached mastery. These findings indicate the need for an instructional model capable of improving both learning outcomes and students' social skills.

3.2. Cycle I

a) Planning

During the planning stage, the researcher prepared Social Studies learning materials using the PBL model, with content focused on Indonesia's potential for natural resources. In addition, the researcher developed student activity observation sheets, teacher activity observation sheets, social skills observation sheets, and Cycle I evaluation questions.

b) Action Implementation

The implementation of Cycle I actions took place on March 10, 2026. The teacher began the lesson with an apperception activity using a video about the potential of Indonesia's natural resources. Students were then presented with contextual problems to discuss in groups. They were divided into six small groups and provided with student worksheets (LKPD) on the utilization of natural resources. Through discussion activities, students conducted investigations, gathered information, formulated solutions, and presented their discussion results in front of the class. At the end of the lesson, the teacher and students collaboratively conducted a reflection and learning evaluation.

c) Observation

1. Students' Social Skills

Observation results indicated that students' social skills improved during Cycle I, although most students remained in the sufficient category. The students' social skills in Cycle I are shown in Table 3.

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Table 3. Students' Social Skills in Cycle I

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Good	8	26.7
Sufficient	22	73.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 3 shows that 8 students (26.7%) achieved the good category, while 22 students (73.3%) were in the sufficient category. A more detailed analysis based on each social skill indicator is presented in Table 4. Overall, presents the distribution of students' social skills based on four observed indicators in Cycle I. The majority of students were classified in the sufficient category across all indicators, namely communication (66.7%), cooperation (60.0%), respect for other opinions (60.0%), and social responsibility (70.0%).

Table 4. Students' Social Skills Based on Indicators in Cycle I

Indicator	Good	Sufficient	Poor	Total	Good	Sufficient	Poor	Total
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Communication	1	3.3	20	66.7	9	30.0	30	100.0
Cooperation	6	20.0	18	60.0	6	20.0	30	100.0
Respect for other opinions	8	26.7	18	60.0	4	13.3	30	100.0
Social responsibility	1	3.3	21	70.0	8	26.7	30	100.0

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Table 5. Summary of Students' Learning Outcomes Cycle I and Pre-Cycle

Cycle	Students achieving mastery		Students are not achieving mastery		Total		Mean Score
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Pre-Cycle	13	43.3	17	56.7	30	100.0	65.3
Cycle I	19	63.3	11	36.7	30	100.0	72.2

Table 5 summarizes students' learning outcomes across the two cycles. The percentage of students achieving mastery increased from 43.3% (pre-cycle) to 63.3% (Cycle I), while the class mean score increased from 65.3 to 72.2.

d) Reflection

The reflection conducted after Cycle I identified several areas for improvement in the next Cycle, including classroom participation, communication during group discussions, collaborative learning, and time management. These findings served as the basis for revising the learning activities implemented in Cycle II.

3.3. Cycle II

a) Planning

During the planning stage of Cycle II, the researcher prepared Social Studies learning materials on the utilization of Indonesia's natural resource potential using the PBL model. The researcher also developed observation sheets and Cycle II evaluation questions.

b) Action Implementation

The implementation of Cycle II actions took place on March 31, 2026. The teacher once again presented contextual problems related to the utilization of natural resources and divided students into heterogeneous groups. Students engaged in group discussions, gathered information, formulated solutions, and presented their group work using digital media such as Canva and PowerPoint. The teacher provided more intensive guidance, enabling students to participate more actively in the learning process.

c) Observation

1. Students' Social Skills

Table 6. Comparison of Students' Social Skills Categories Between Cycle I and Cycle II

Category	Cycle I		Cycle II	
	f	%	f	%
Very Good	-	-	5	16.7
Good	8	26.7	23	76.7
Sufficient	22	73.3	2	6.6
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0

Table 6 presents a comparison of students' social skills categories between Cycle I and Cycle II. The percentage of students in the good category increased from 26.7% in Cycle I to 76.7% in Cycle II, while the percentage of students in the sufficient category decreased from 73.3% to 6.6%. In Cycle II, 16.7% of students were newly categorized as very good, a category that was not observed in Cycle I. A more detailed analysis based on each social skill indicator is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Students' Social Skills Based on Indicators in Cycle II

Indicator	Good		Sufficient		Poor		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Communication	1	3.3	19	63.3	10	33.3	30	100.0
Cooperation	4	13.3	19	63.3	7	23.3	30	100.0
Respect for other opinions	2	6.7	16	53.3	12	40.0	30	100.0
Social responsibility	-	-	17	56.7	13	43.3	30	100.0

Table 7 shows the distribution of students' social skills in Cycle I across four indicators. Most students were classified in the sufficient category for communication (63.3%), cooperation (63.3%), respect for other opinions (53.3%), and social responsibility (56.7%).

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Table 8 summarizes students' learning outcomes across the three cycles. The percentage of students achieving mastery increased from 43.3% (pre-cycle) to 63.3% (Cycle I) and 86.7% (Cycle II), while the class mean score increased from 65.3 to 72.2 and 79.5, respectively.

Table 8. Learning Outcomes in Cycle II

Cycle	Students achieving mastery		Students are not achieving mastery		Total		Mean Score
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Pre-Cycle	13	43.3	17	56.7	30	100.0	65.3
Cycle I	19	63.3	11	36.7	30	100.0	72.2
Cycle II	26	86.7	4	13.3	30	100.0	79.5

d) Reflection

During Cycle II, students demonstrated greater activity, self-confidence, and collaborative ability within their respective groups. The application of the PBL model proved successful in advancing both students' social skills and their Social Studies learning outcomes. Given that all predetermined research success indicators had been fulfilled, the study was brought to a close upon the completion of Cycle II.

Discussion

a) Implementation of the Problem-Based Learning Model in Social Studies Instruction

The implementation of the PBL instructional model in Social Studies instruction in Class VII-A at SMPN 14 Madiun was carried out through the stages of problem orientation, student organization, investigation, presentation of results, and reflection. This instructional model provided students with opportunities to actively engage in the learning process through discussion and problem-solving activities. In line with this, [12] states that PBL encourages students to identify a problem and apply their existing knowledge to resolve it, thereby acquiring new knowledge. Through this process, students are trained to think critically, analytically, systematically, and logically as they solve the problems formulated [13].

This finding is also strengthened by [14], whose empirical data indicated that the majority of students in the PBL class attained good (72.7%) and very good (27.3%) activity categories, while those in the control class receiving conventional instruction showed predominantly low levels of engagement (63.6% not good and 27.3% not very good). This comparison reinforces that the active engagement observed in the present study is not incidental but reflects a broader pattern associated with PBL implementation across different school contexts.

In Cycle I, students still experienced difficulties in adapting to the implemented instructional model. Some students remained passive and lacked confidence in expressing their opinions, a challenge commonly reported during the early stages of PBL implementation as students and educators adjust to a more student-centered approach [15]. Following the improvements made in Cycle II, students became more active, independent, and capable of collaborating effectively, no longer functioning merely as passive recipients of information but as active participants in seeking information, engaging in discussion, and formulating solutions.

This increase in student engagement is reflected in the improvement of students' learning outcomes, with the mastery percentage rising from 63.3% in Cycle I to 86.7% in Cycle II, alongside a corresponding increase in the class mean score from 72.2 to 79.5. This finding is consistent with previous research [16], which reported that PBL enhances critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and active participation in Social Studies instruction. However, while emphasizing primarily cognitive gains, the present study further demonstrates that the shift from passive to active engagement observed during the transition from Cycle I to Cycle II was accompanied by a parallel improvement in students' social skills, suggesting that the benefits of PBL in this

context were not limited to academic achievement but also extended to students' interpersonal and collaborative competencies.

In addition to its impact on cognitive development, implementing the PBL model also positively affected students' social interaction throughout the learning process. Through group discussion activities, students learned to communicate, collaborate, respect their peers' opinions, and take responsibility for group tasks. Learning became more interactive as students were given the opportunity to exchange ideas and present their discussion outcomes to the class. This condition is elaborated upon in the research of [17], which states that the PBL model not only influences the cognitive aspect but also supports the development of students' social skills.

The effectiveness of PBL implementation in this study was further supported by the use of digital media such as Canva and PowerPoint during presentation activities, which made the application of the PBL model more engaging and innovative [18]. The use of digital instructional media, such as Canva, helped students more easily comprehend the material through concrete, engaging visualizations, while simultaneously enhancing their communication skills when presenting discussion results. Previous studies have shown that Canva can transform abstract ideas into concrete visual representations, thereby enhancing students' enthusiasm for learning and capturing their attention [19]. However, it is important to note that the improvement in students' learning outcomes and social skills in this study cannot be attributed solely to PBL implementation. Since digital media and the PBL model were applied simultaneously, it is difficult to isolate their individual contributions to the observed improvements. Future studies employing a controlled comparison design for example, comparing PBL with and without digital media are recommended to more precisely determine the distinct role of digital media in enhancing students' learning outcomes and social skills. Taken together, these findings tentatively suggest that the combined use of PBL and digital media may offer a promising instructional approach for improving Social Studies learning, although further research with a more rigorous design is needed to confirm this.

b) Enhancement of Social Skills through Problem-Based Learning

The findings indicate that implementing the PBL model enhanced students' social skills. In Cycle I, the majority of students remained in the sufficient category, particularly in communication and collaboration. Following the instructional improvements made in Cycle II, students' social skills improved significantly. This enhancement was evident in students' ability to communicate, collaborate, respect others' opinions, and demonstrate responsibility during group activities. These findings support the view of [20], who argue that social skills such as effective communication, collaborative teamwork, conflict resolution, and empathy are essential for students to build harmonious relationships, particularly in group-based learning activities. In the present study, this was reflected in the marked improvement in the cooperation indicator, which increased from the good category in only 6 students (20.0%) in Cycle I to 19 students (63.3%) in Cycle II following the implementation of PBL-based group

projects. This suggests that the collaborative structure inherent in PBL, which requires students to plan, discuss, and complete tasks together, provides a more concrete and structured context for developing social skills than the general classroom interactions described in [20], where the mechanism of skill development was not explicitly tied to a specific instructional model.

The improvement in social skills resulting from the implementation of PBL occurred because this instructional model positions students at the center of learning, requiring them to actively interact with their peers. The processes of discussion, problem investigation, and group presentation encouraged students to practice expressing their ideas, listening to others' opinions, and making collective decisions. These conditions helped students develop interpersonal communication skills and social collaboration within the learning environment. Furthermore, [21] asserts that PBL can help students identify problems from various perspectives, enhance communication skills, and evaluate their own personal problem-solving strategies.

These findings are further supported by [22], which states that implementing the PBL model can improve students' collaborative and communication skills, as students are directly involved in the group problem-solving process. Additionally, research by [23] indicates that problem-based learning can foster attitudes of responsibility, tolerance, and respect for others' opinions through active, collaborative group discussion. Beyond deepening students' understanding of Social Studies content, implementing the PBL model also provided a more authentic social learning experience, as students were confronted with situations that required genuine interaction and collaboration. Thus, the PBL model can serve as an effective instructional alternative for enhancing students' social skills while simultaneously equipping them with competencies that are essential in everyday life.

c) **Enhancement of Social Studies Learning Outcomes through Problem-Based Learning**

The implementation of the PBL model also positively influenced students' Social Studies learning outcomes. The class average score increased from 65.3 in the pre-cycle to 72.2 in Cycle I, and further improved to 79.5 in Cycle II. The learning mastery rate also rose from 43.3% in the pre-cycle to 63.3% in Cycle I, reaching 86.7% in Cycle II. This is in line with the findings of [24], who reported a statistically significant improvement in students' learning outcomes after using a gamified LMS platform, with mean scores rising from 54.5 in the pre-test to 78.3 in the post-test, an average gain of 23.8 points, indicating that innovative instructional approaches are consistently effective in enhancing students' academic performance. These results demonstrate that learning with the PBL model helped students comprehend the subject matter more effectively, as supported by [3], who argues that learning outcomes reflect behavioral changes that occur during the learning process.

This improvement occurred because the PBL model provided students with the opportunity to discover and construct knowledge independently through problem-solving activities in real-life contexts [25]. This process helped students develop a

deeper understanding of Social Studies concepts, as they were not merely passive recipients of information from the teacher but actively sought, processed, and drew conclusions together with their group members. Such activities made learning more engaging and enhanced students' motivation to learn. These findings are supported by [26], which states that implementing the PBL model can improve student learning outcomes because learning is centered on students' activities in systematically and collaboratively solving problems. Furthermore, research by [27] indicates that the PBL model can enhance conceptual understanding and Social Studies learning outcomes through group discussion activities, problem investigation, and the presentation of learning results. Thus, implementing the PBL model can serve as an effective instructional alternative.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single class, with a relatively small sample of 30 respondents, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the intervention was implemented over a short period, consisting of only two cycles, which may not fully capture the long-term effects of the PBL model on students' learning outcomes and social skills. Third, as noted above, the simultaneous use of digital media alongside PBL makes it difficult to isolate the distinct contribution of each element. Future research is encouraged to involve larger, more diverse samples across multiple classes or schools, longer intervention periods, and controlled-comparison designs to strengthen the validity and generalizability of the findings and the model for improving students' Social Studies learning outcomes.

12 4. CONCLUSION

The results of this classroom action research, conducted with Class VII-A students at SMPN 14 Madiun, demonstrate that the PBL instructional model was effective in enhancing both social skills and Social Studies learning outcomes among the students in this class. Through discussion, problem-solving, and presentation activities, students became more active, confident, capable of collaborating, and more appreciative of others' opinions. The findings show an increase in learning mastery from 43.3% in the pre-cycle to 86.7% in Cycle II, along with a corresponding improvement in students' social skills across all indicators. As this study was conducted in a single class with a relatively small sample size, these findings should be interpreted as context-specific rather than generalizable to broader student populations.

Beyond its contribution to academic achievement, the PBL model fostered a richer and more learner-centered educational experience, offering practical value for Social Studies teachers. Teachers may implement PBL through structured group discussions, real-life problem investigation, and student presentations, supported by digital media such as Canva or PowerPoint to enhance student engagement and communication.

Subsequent studies are encouraged to involve larger, more diverse samples across multiple classes or educational levels, to compare PBL with other instructional models, such as project-based or cooperative learning, and to incorporate digital instructional media more systematically to clarify its role in maximizing learning outcomes.

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