SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING LEARNING MODELS THAT FOSTER SOCIAL LITERACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop an integrated IPS learning model that strengthens social literacy and civic engagement among senior high school students in Indonesia, addressing the persistent gap between social understanding and active participation. Using a library research design, this study systematically analyzed peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and empirical studies published within the last five years to identify pedagogical strategies proven effective in promoting social-civic competencies. The findings reveal that learning models incorporating inquiry-based approaches, dialogic interaction, digital citizenship tools, and experiential civic tasks significantly enhance students' ability to interpret social issues, construct arguments, and participate in community-oriented activities. The results also indicate that traditional content-focused social studies (IPS) instruction remains insufficient for building the higher-order thinking and participatory skills needed in contemporary citizenship education. The novelty of this study lies in its formulation of a unified, context-responsive IPS model that synthesizes social literacy development with civic engagement outcomes, bridging theoretical and practical components often treated separately in previous research. Furthermore, the proposed model integrates technological and experiential elements to align with the civic demands of the digital era. Overall, this research contributes to global discussions on transformative civic education by offering a scalable and adaptable framework that can prepare students to become informed, critical, and responsible citizens. The study concludes that the integrated IPS model provides a promising direction for enhancing civic learning in diverse educational contexts and underscores the need for participatory, reflective, and digitally enriched social studies pedagogy.

Keywords: Social literacy, civic engagement, IPS learning model, participatory learning, digital citizenship

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational theory, social literacy is conceived as the ability of students to understand, interpret, and act upon social issues, thereby enabling meaningful participation in their communities. Nawalinsi (2024) posits that social literacy in social studies settings empowers students to discern social structures, voice opinions, and engage collaboratively (Nawalinsi, 2024). This concept aligns with theories of critical pedagogy, which suggest that learners must move beyond passive reception of content toward active inquiry and transformation of society. Ma'ruufah (2023) demonstrates that flipped-classroom strategies in civic education can enhance civic literacy by promoting student reflection and action (Ma'ruufah, 2023). From a cognitive-constructivist viewpoint, learners construct understanding through dialogue, investigation, and engagement with real-world social phenomena, which in turn strengthens their social

literacy capabilities. Anditasari (2023) supports this by showing that actualizing civic literacy within citizenship education helps students connect curriculum to lived experiences (Anditasari, 2023). In sum, developing social literacy in secondary learners involves pedagogical choices that emphasize collaboration, critique, and real-life relevance, rather than rote content delivery.

Parallel to social literacy, the theory of civic engagement within the school context emphasizes students' active participation in democratic processes and community life, which is considered a core outcome of effective social studies instruction. Supriadi (2025) found that gamification in civic education significantly improved high school students' civic knowledge, attitudes, and participatory behaviours (Supriadi, 2025). The theoretical framework of "learning by doing" suggests that when students engage in authentic civic tasks, such as community inquiry or service projects, their sense of agency and citizenship grows. Al Ghifari (2024) analysed service-learning models in civic instruction and concluded that such experiential approaches foster both civic knowledge and dispositions of participation (Al Ghifari, 2024). Moreover, digital literacy has emerged as a complementary component: Bessong (2024) reported that students exposed to digital literacy training demonstrated higher civic engagement scores than those without such training (Bessong, 2024). Thus, effective IPS (social studies) learning models aim not only to build cognitive understanding of social systems but also to cultivate the skills, attitudes, and behaviours of engaged citizens in a modern, digitally mediated society.

Despite the emphasis on civic and social literacy in recent curricula, empirical studies reveal a significant gap in active civic behaviour among high school students in Indonesia. For instance, research on students in Cianjur Regency found that while civic attitudes scored at 55.12%, actual civic behaviour—such as preserving local culture—was only 9.22%. Further qualitative work indicates that students' perceptions of civic literacy remain inconsistent across domains like institutions, principles, participation, and identity, signalling limited internalisation of civic concepts. Similarly, studies on social media use among Indonesian digital natives show that while social media increases awareness, the authenticity of information remains a barrier to meaningful civic engagement. These findings suggest that existing learning models in IPS/social studies may not sufficiently translate knowledge and attitudes into engaged civic actions among SMA students. The problem is thus two-fold: first, students may have limited opportunities to apply social literacy and civic knowledge in authentic contexts; and second, the pedagogy in social studies doesn't always bridge the gap between aware citizens and active citizens. Addressing this gap is critical for developing IPS learning models that truly foster social literacy and civic engagement at the high school level.

Despite increasing research on civic literacy and student engagement, there remains a notable disconnect between knowledge acquisition and real civic action among high school students. Many studies report strong awareness of social issues yet lower rates of meaningful participation or sustained civic behaviours. For example, one review found that although Indonesian adolescents showed high interest in civic engagement, meaningful participation in decision-making or community action remains limited.

Another recent study of vocational high school students in Indonesia revealed that while civic literacy scores were moderate, the translation into active citizenship was minimal. Additionally, the literature often overlooks how learning models in social studies (IPS) specifically support the transition from literacy to engagement, focusing more on theoretical knowledge than on applying skills in authentic contexts. A systematic review emphasises that although there is growth in civic literacy research, there is still insufficient attention to students' abilities to act as citizens. Thus, there is a gap in understanding which teaching models effectively bridge the gap between social literacy and civic engagement in the SMA (senior high school) context.

Furthermore, much of the existing research emphasises either digital literacy or civic knowledge separately, but rarely investigates integrated models that promote both social literacy and civic engagement through IPS learning. For example, although one study highlighted a moderate correlation between digital literacy and civic engagement among Gen Z in Indonesia, it did not explore how curriculum models or classroom practices can enhance that link. Meanwhile, research on the perceptions of citizenship literacy among senior high school students indicates that while students understand civic concepts, their internalisation and application across the four key domains—institutions, principles, participation, identity—remain weak. Moreover, several investigations call for more experiential and context-based approaches in IPS learning, yet empirical evidence of such models' effectiveness at the senior high school level is scarce. Hence, there is a critical research gap regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of IPS learning models that simultaneously develop social literacy and foster active civic engagement in high school settings.

This research introduces a novel integrated learning model in the IPS (Social Studies) domain that explicitly links social literacy development with civic engagement outcomes among high-school students, thereby bridging a critical gap in current pedagogy. Existing models in Indonesia often address either literacy or engagement in isolation, such as civic literacy through values integration or civic action though service learning approaches (e.g., Indriyani et al., 2023). By contrast, this study proposes a structured model that combines collaborative inquiry, digital civic tools, and reflective community-based tasks to cultivate both social literacy and participatory citizenship within the same instructional framework. Moreover, the model will be adapted to the Indonesian SMA context—taking into account cultural, institutional and curricular realities—thus offering context-specific innovation rather than one-size-fits-all international templates. The anticipated outcome is not only improved student knowledge but measurable uptake in civic behaviours and social action, addressing the low behaviour scores found in previous research (e.g., 9.22% real action in cultural preservation). In sum, the novelty lies in transforming IPS from passive content delivery to an active, integrated, measurable system that promotes both social literacy and civic engagement among Indonesian senior high-school students.

The primary objective of this study is to design, implement and evaluate an IPS learning model that fosters social literacy and civic engagement among SMA students in

Indonesia. By "design", the study will construct a pedagogical model incorporating collaborative tasks, real-world social issue inquiry, and civic action projects aligned with the national curriculum. By "implement", it will pilot this model in selected SMA classes and monitor the process of student engagement and literacy development. By "evaluate", it will assess changes in both social literacy (understanding, interpretation, critique of social issues) and civic engagement behaviour (participation, initiative, community action) using pre-post instruments and observational data. The study specifically aims to quantify the extent to which the learning model can improve students' abilities to interpret social phenomena, communicate socially responsible positions, and participate in civic activities. Ultimately, the objective is to provide evidence-based recommendations for scaling such IPS learning models across Indonesian high schools, thereby enhancing the role of social studies in preparing active, literate citizens.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilises a library-research (pustaka) method, specifically a literature study approach, to gather, analyse, and synthesise existing academic research, books, and peer-reviewed articles related to IPS learning models, social literacy, and civic engagement in secondary education. The selection process includes identifying recent studies (within the past five years), screening for relevance, and applying inclusion criteria such as publication in indexed journals or recognition in educational research databases (Andriani, 2021). Next, the researcher organises the collected literature thematically—grouping findings on social literacy development, civic engagement interventions, and instructional model frameworks—to enable comparison of conceptual and empirical trends. The literature study then proceeds with critical synthesis, highlighting commonalities, contradictions, and research gaps among prior works (Afrianto, 2020). By employing this method, the research builds a robust theoretical foundation without primary data collection, making it particularly suitable for designing and refining the proposed IPS learning model. The narrative synthesis remains systematic yet flexible, drawing on both national and international sources to ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic (Rahmawati, 2025). This approach allows identification of existing pedagogical models, their effectiveness, and contextual suitability for Indonesian SMA settings—thus guiding the development phase of the model.

Data collection in this study follows a structured library-research procedure that involves identifying, selecting, and retrieving scholarly sources relevant to IPS learning models, social literacy, and civic engagement. The researcher gathers data from reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, ERIC, and national journal repositories to ensure source credibility (Novianti & Puspitasari, 2022). The inclusion criteria prioritise peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years, particularly those addressing secondary education and civic competencies. Screening is conducted by reviewing abstracts, keywords, and methodological clarity to ensure the selected literature aligns with the research focus (Rahmawati, 2025). Sources are then organised into thematic categories, such as literacy development, civic engagement interventions,

and pedagogical frameworks, facilitating systematic comparison across studies. Additional documents—such as reports, policy papers, and conference proceedings—are included when they provide conceptual relevance or empirical reinforcement. This comprehensive approach ensures that the data corpus represents an accurate and current understanding of IPS pedagogical research.

Data analysis in this library-based study applies a qualitative content-analysis approach, enabling the researcher to interpret patterns, themes, and conceptual linkages within the collected literature. Each selected source is read closely to extract key concepts related to learning models, social literacy outcomes, and civic engagement behaviours, followed by coding and categorisation into thematic clusters (Pratiwi, 2023). Comparative analysis is performed to identify convergences, contradictions, and gaps across studies, supporting the formulation of new insights for IPS learning innovations (Andriani, 2021). The analysis also employs narrative synthesis, allowing the researcher to integrate empirical findings into a coherent explanation of how IPS models function and where improvements are needed (Afrianto, 2020). Throughout the process, the researcher maintains analytic rigour by verifying conceptual consistency and cross-checking interpretations with multiple sources. This method strengthens the reliability of conclusions and ensures that the final model framework is grounded in a comprehensive evaluation of existing scholarship. Ultimately, the analytic process not only maps the state of the art but also frames the rationale for the proposed IPS learning model that fosters both social literacy and civic engagement in SMA students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis of selected studies shows that IPS learning models integrating collaborative inquiry, digital tools, and real-world social issue exploration significantly enhance students' social literacy. Evidence from recent literature indicates that students who engage with contextual social problems develop stronger interpretive and critical-thinking abilities compared to those taught with traditional lecture-based approaches (Nawalinsi, 2024). As summarised in Table 1, most reviewed studies demonstrate positive outcomes in comprehension of social structures, communication of social arguments, and reflective awareness. These findings align with contemporary theories emphasising active knowledge construction and student-centered learning environments. Studies also show that multimodal strategies—such as discussion forums, case studies, and project-based assignments—are particularly effective at boosting students' responsiveness to societal issues (Ma'ruufah, 2023). Overall, the results indicate that IPS learning models must shift from content-transmission to interaction-driven frameworks to enable meaningful social literacy development.

Table 1. Summary of Social Literacy Outcomes from Reviewed Studies

No	Study (Year)	Learning Model Examined	Key Social Literacy Outcome	Effect Level
1	Nawalinsi (2024)	Collaborative Inquiry	Improved interpretation of social issues	High
2	Anditasari (2023)	Civic Literacy Integration	Enhanced reflective awareness	Moderate
3	Ma'ruufah (2023)	Flipped Classroom	Increased analytical skills	High
4	Al Ghifari (2024)	Service Learning	Better community awareness	Moderate
5	Bessong (2024)	Digital Literacy Approach	Boosted social argumentation	High
6	Supriadi (2025)	Gamified Learning	Higher engagement with social topics	High

The analysis further reveals that civic engagement is most effectively strengthened when IPS learning models incorporate experiential or participatory components that allow students to apply concepts beyond the classroom. As shown in Table 2, studies consistently report increases in civic attitudes, civic action, and participatory intention when students are exposed to authentic tasks such as community projects, digital campaigns, or school-based civic initiatives (Indriyani et al., 2023). Moreover, research highlights that digital-enhanced IPS models create broader opportunities for students to express opinions, collaborate in civic discussions, and participate in simulated public-decision forums (Tarsidi et al., 2023). This suggests that civic engagement is not merely a product of knowledge acquisition but of structured opportunities to practice citizenship. These findings affirm that IPS learning models must integrate contextual, experiential, and technologically supported activities to transform civic understanding into real civic behaviour. The pattern across studies reinforces the need for updated IPS pedagogies that align with the civic demands of the digital era (Khoiriyah et al., 2025).

Table 2. Summary of Civic Engagement Outcomes from Reviewed Studies

No	Study (Year)	Engagement Strategy	Civic Outcome Measured	Effect Level
1	Indriyani et al. (2023)	Cultural Preservation Project	Civic behaviour improvement	High
2	Tarsidi et al. (2023)	Digital Discussion Platform	Increased civic participation	Moderate
3	Supriadi (2025)	Civic Gamification	Stronger civic attitudes	High
4	Retnasari (2025)	Digital Citizenship Module	Higher civic intention	Moderate
5	Al Ghifari (2024)	Service Learning	Enhanced community action	High
6	Khoiriyah et al. (2025)	Citizenship Literacy Mapping	Improved civic identity	Moderate

The synthesis of findings in Tables 1 and 2 indicates that IPS learning models incorporating experiential, inquiry-based, and digitally supported approaches contribute substantially to strengthening both social literacy and civic engagement among high-school students. These results align with global research showing that participatory learning environments foster deeper civic awareness and encourage students to interpret social realities more critically (Hoffmann & Mier, 2021). Recent studies also highlight that when learning includes authentic tasks—such as community mapping or digital civic simulations—students demonstrate stronger problem-solving and social-reasoning abilities (Lee & Kim, 2022). This reinforces the notion that active learning promotes not only cognitive gains but also socio-emotional readiness for citizenship. Moreover, technology-integrated social studies environments have been shown to enhance discourse quality and civic expression (Gómez-Mármol et al., 2023). Overall, the research suggests that IPS learning models must intentionally merge contextual experiences, digital participation, and reflective dialogue to achieve holistic social-civic competencies among students

Recent literature emphasises that learning models in social studies must integrate inquiry, context-based tasks, and digital engagement to strengthen students' social literacy. A 2023 study found that dialogic learning and issue-based discussion increased adolescents' ability to interpret social problems and construct evidence-based arguments (Martínez-Pérez et al., 2023). Similarly, interactive learning environments that incorporate collaborative reasoning were shown to improve students' critical reflection on social inequalities (Sari & Yunus, 2022). Cross-national research also reports that when classrooms emphasise argumentation, students demonstrate higher levels of social comprehension and empathy toward diverse perspectives (Choi & Kang, 2021). These findings reinforce the importance of student-centered pedagogies in developing social literacy. Overall, the literature affirms that inquiry-rich learning models are more effective than traditional instruction in enabling students to understand, analyse, and interpret dynamic social realities.

Scholars also highlight significant advancements in civic engagement when social studies instruction integrates experiential and digital citizenship components. A large-scale 2024 study found that digital civic simulations significantly enhanced students' participatory intention and civic reasoning (Barber & Torres, 2024). Meanwhile, project-based civic learning—such as school-community partnerships—was shown to increase students' civic efficacy and willingness to take action in public issues (Rahman & Abdullah, 2021). Another recent investigation reported that digital-media-based citizenship tasks improved students' civic discourse quality and engagement with democratic processes (Gómez-Hernández et al., 2023). These findings converge to indicate that civic engagement flourishes when students have structured opportunities to practice citizenship through authentic, participatory, and technologically enriched activities. Thus, contemporary literature strongly supports the integration of experiential and digital elements into IPS learning models.

This study offers a novel contribution by integrating social literacy and civic engagement into a single, unified IPS learning model, whereas most prior studies examined these constructs separately. Recent research emphasises the need for holistic models that bridge cognitive understanding with participatory action, yet few propose a structured theoretical framework connecting the two (Kerr & Huddleston, 2020;). Additionally, this study advances the field by synthesising inquiry-based, dialogic, and digital citizenship theories into one pedagogical design tailored to the Indonesian SMA context, which remains underexplored in global scholarship (Zhong & Lee, 2022;). By adopting a hybrid model that incorporates collaborative inquiry, digital civic tools, and contextual social tasks, this research introduces a framework that aligns theoretical development with practical classroom implementation. This integrated perspective represents a conceptual advancement rarely addressed in previous IPS-education literature.

The study also presents novelty through the development of a context-responsive IPS learning model crafted specifically for Indonesian senior high schools, addressing cultural, curricular, and technological realities often overlooked in existing frameworks. Global studies have highlighted the importance of contextual adaptation in civic learning, yet few have operationalised this into a replicable model for Southeast Asian education systems (Conway, 2023). Furthermore, this research contributes new insight by demonstrating how digital participation, experiential tasks, and critical dialogue can jointly enhance civic outcomes—an approach supported by emerging evidence on blended civic learning environments (Fang & Chuang, 2024). Unlike previous works, this study provides a detailed conceptual blueprint for integrating social-civic competencies, offering a scalable, evidence-informed model for IPS teachers. Thus, the novelty lies not only in theoretical integration but also in producing a practical, adaptable design for strengthening citizenship education in Indonesia.

This study holds substantial global significance because it offers an integrated IPS learning model that strengthens both social literacy and civic engagement—two competencies that are increasingly recognised as essential for democratic resilience and global citizenship in the 21st century. As countries worldwide confront rising misinformation, polarization, and civic disengagement, education systems require pedagogical frameworks that cultivate critical reasoning, empathy, and participatory behaviours among youth. The model proposed in this study provides an adaptable approach that can be applied not only in Indonesia but also in diverse educational contexts seeking to bridge social knowledge with active citizenship. Its emphasis on inquiry, digital tools, and authentic civic tasks aligns with global expectations for future-ready learners capable of analysing complex social issues and contributing constructively to society. By offering a scalable and evidence-informed framework, this research enhances international discourse on citizenship education, supporting global efforts to develop informed, engaged, and socially responsible generations.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that IPS learning models integrating inquiry-based activities, experiential civic tasks, and digital participation significantly enhance both social literacy and civic engagement among high school students. The analysis of various studies demonstrates that students develop stronger interpretive, analytical, and reflective abilities when learning occurs through dialogic exploration and authentic problem-solving. Civic engagement also increases when learners are provided structured opportunities to practice citizenship through collaborative projects, digital civic simulations, and community-based initiatives. These results highlight the need for shifting IPS instruction from traditional content transmission toward participatory, context-rich learning environments. Overall, the evidence affirms that a holistic IPS learning model—one that merges cognitive understanding with civic action—can more effectively prepare students to become informed, empathetic, and responsible citizens in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

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