

The Implementation of Game-Based Learning through the 'Dakword Challenge' to Enhance Learning Activities in Grade IX Social Studies Classes

Ifa Alfani Khairiyah^{1*}, Syamsul Bachri², Esthi Wahyu Utami³

¹Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

³SMP Negeri 6 Malang, Indonesia

*Email: ifa.alfani.2431749@students.um.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to improve students' learning activity in social studies subjects through the implementation of Dakword Challenge game-based learning. The problems raised are the low participation, discussion, and enthusiasm of class IX-5 students of SMP Negeri 6 Malang. Dakword Challenge combines the traditional dakon game with digital media Wordwall in the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) cooperative learning model. The study used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method for two cycles. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and tests. The results showed a significant increase in student learning activity. In cycle I, most students (67.75%) were in the medium category and only 9.68% were in the high category. After improving the strategy in cycle II, 61.29% of students reached the high category and only 6.45% were in the low category. Improvements include more systematic delivery of rules, initial simulations, and role rotation in groups. Dakword Challenge-based learning has proven effective in improving students' social studies learning activity. In cycle I, many students had learning activity in the medium category with a total of 67.75%, only 9.68% were in the high category, and 22.58% were in the low category. After improvements were made in cycle II, learning activity increased significantly with 61.29% of students in the high category, 6.45% in the low category, and 32.26% in the medium category. Thus, from this study it is known that Dakword Challenge game-based learning is effective in increasing the learning activity of students in social studies subjects.

Keywords: Game Based Learning, Learning Activeness, Social Studies

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan meningkatkan keaktifan belajar peserta didik dalam mata pelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial melalui penerapan pembelajaran berbasis game Dakword Challenge. Permasalahan yang diangkat adalah rendahnya partisipasi, diskusi, dan antusiasme siswa kelas IX-5 SMP Negeri 6 Malang. Dakword Challenge menggabungkan permainan tradisional dakon dengan media digital Wordwall dalam model pembelajaran kooperatif Teams Games Tournament (TGT). Penelitian menggunakan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) selama dua siklus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan tes. Hasil menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan dalam keaktifan belajar siswa. Pada siklus I, banyak peserta didik memiliki keaktifan belajar pada kategori sedang dengan jumlah 67,75%, hanya 9,68% yang berada di kategori tinggi, dan 22,58% pada kategori rendah. Setelah dilakukan perbaikan pada siklus II, keaktifan belajar meningkat secara signifikan dengan 61,29% peserta didik berada pada kategori tinggi, 6,45% berada pada kategori rendah, dan 32,26% pada kategori sedang. Dengan demikian, dari penelitian ini diketahui bahwa pembelajaran berbasis game Dakword Challenge efektif untuk meningkatkan keaktifan belajar peserta didik mata pelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Berbasis Game, Keaktifan Belajar, Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial

Introduction

Education as a process cannot be separated from learning activities carried out between educators and students. In the learning process, a teacher has an important role in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning activities. According to Rahma., the learning process carried out also needs to be adjusted to students to shape them into dynamic, creative, and innovative individuals (Puspita, 2025). In addition, to improve students' abilities in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, students must be actively involved in every series of learning that has been designed by the teacher.

The learning process that is centered on students can be seen from the activeness of students during learning. The activeness of student learning determines the quality of learning and is an important indicator for knowing the success of the learning process. Activeness is interpreted as an approach to learning that is aimed at developing the potential of students so that they can achieve the desired learning outcomes (Helmiati, 2012). Therefore, active learning is an important thing that needs to be considered in student-oriented learning. Teacher involvement in the learning process greatly determines the activeness of students in the learning process. Based on the results of observations and surveys conducted in class IX-5 SMPN 6 Malang, it was found that the main problem in social studies learning is the low learning activity of students. Students tend to be passive when participating in learning, do not participate in discussions, and rarely ask or answer questions from teachers. Not only that, many students seem unfocused, talk to friends, or divert their attention to other activities that are not related to learning. This condition indicates that the learning method used is still not interesting enough and has not been able to increase student engagement optimally.

One of the causes of low learning activity is the use of the same learning method repeatedly, so that students feel bored and tired. A survey conducted on students showed that most students are more interested in interactive and game-based learning. Students feel more motivated if the material presented is packaged in the form of fun and challenging activities. This statement is reinforced by research by Ni Luh et al, which states that through game-based learning, student engagement can increase and create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere (Luh et al., 2025).

As a solution to this problem, innovation is needed in learning strategies that can increase student activity. One approach that can be applied is the use of the Dakword Challenge game. Dakword Challenge is an educational game that combines the concept of dakon with puzzles assisted by wordwall media. This model is designed to encourage students to be more active in learning historical concepts through interactive and fun methods. According to research by Hady Wijaya et al., the application of educational games through wordwalls can increase student learning activity in Indonesian language subjects (Hady Wijaya, Nazury, 2024). In addition, the use of dakon games can increase attention, active participation, and competitive spirit in the History learning process (Hamid et al., 2021).

Game-based learning (GBL) has emerged as an effective approach to enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in social science education. Studies have shown that GBL can improve students' social skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Nugraha et al., 2018); (Untari, 2022). Traditional games and innovative learning models, such as the Nusantara Quartet Card Game, have been found to significantly impact students' learning outcomes and increase their active participation in the classroom (Arigayo et al., 2023). GBL aligns with constructivist principles and student-centered approaches, promoting collaboration, communication, and creativity among learners (Untari, 2022). Additionally, the implementation of game methods in social science classes can help students better understand their environment and improve their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities (Ifrianti, 2015). Overall, GBL offers a promising alternative for 21st-century learning, addressing the challenges of traditional teaching methods in social science education.

In addition, research from Nabila and Rudy states that learning using interactive wordwall games can increase student activity in the learning process (Putriani & Gunawan, 2023). Games that involve healthy competition have also been shown to increase interaction between students, so that they can be actively involved in learning activities. Therefore, the use of Dakword Challenge is expected to contribute to increasing student learning activity in social studies learning. Based on the problems above, this study is entitled " The Implementation of Game-Based Learning through the 'Dakword Challenge' to Enhance Learning Activities in Grade IX Social Studies Classes". The Dakword Challenge model is an innovation in learning that combines the traditional Dakon game, Wordwall digital media, and team-based competitions to increase student learning activity. This game is designed so that students can actively participate through exciting playing strategies. In its implementation, students take part in the Dakon game that has been modified with social studies questions, then answer questions through the Wordwall platform interactively.

Method

This study uses Classroom Action Research (CAR). The classroom action research model used is the Kemmis and McTaggart version. In the Kemmis and McTaggart model, the implementation phase (act) and observation (observe) are combined into one phase because both are carried out simultaneously (Afandi, 2011). The Kemmis and McTaggart model image is in the form of a string where one string symbolizes one cycle of activities presented in the following image:

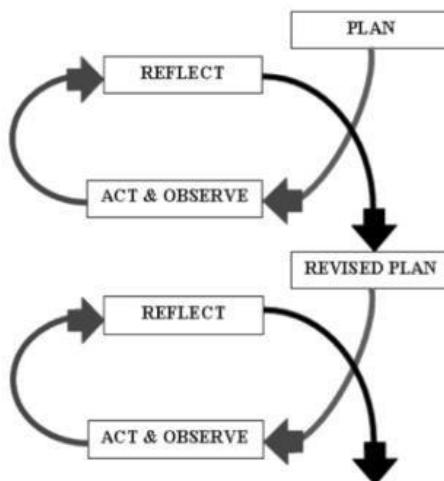


Figure 1. Kemmis & McTaggart Classroom Action Research Model

Source: (Afandi, 2011)

Classroom Action Research involves teachers and several people as observers with the aim of conducting observations to determine the strengths and weaknesses that will later become material for improvement in subsequent learning. This is in line with the view of Hady Wijaya, et al., that classroom action research is a study where teachers and researchers work together during the research process(Hady Wijaya, Nazuryt, 2024). One of the characteristics of Classroom Action Research (CAR) is that there are real actions that are applied to solve problems, where these actions are carried out naturally and function as solutions to the problems faced (Puspita, 2025). This research was conducted in two cycles with each cycle following the stages of classroom action research. There are 4 stages that must be carried out in CAR, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 6 Malang, Klojen District, Malang City, for two cycles.

The subjects of this study were students in grades IX-5 with a total of 31 students. Data collection techniques include using observation, interviews, tests, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with mentor teachers and colleagues who became the observation team during the learning process. Not only that, observation is also an important means of obtaining data and to find out what improvement plans need to be improved in the next cycle. This study uses an observation sheet instrument that supports the observation process to determine student activities. The data that has been collected is then analyzed to find out how active students are when the learning process in cycle I and cycle II takes place.

There are several indicators of learning activity that need to be considered during observation and data collection activities. According to (Sudjana, 2016) indicators of learning activity include: (1) students participate in working on assignments, (2) involvement in solving problems, (3) asking questions, (3) seeking information, (4) discussing, (5) assessing self-ability, (6) learning to solve problems, and (7) seeking and applying the information obtained. Each indicator in learning activity will be assessed with a maximum score of 4 points and a minimum of 1 point. The percentage of success of learning activity with game-based learning "dakword challenge" can be known using the formula from (Prasetyo & Abdurrahman, 2021) below:

$$\text{Success percentage} = \frac{\Sigma \text{ jumlah skor yang diperoleh}}{\Sigma \text{ maximum score}} \times 100\%$$

After calculating the percentage of success of learning activity with the formula above, the level of achievement of success can be analyzed using the following criteria from (Suharsimi Arikunto, Suhardjono, 2011):

Table 1. Indicators of Student Activity Achievement

Achievement	Criteria
75% - 100%	High
51% - 74%	Medium
25% - 50%	Low
0% - 24%	Very Low

Results & Discussion

Result

Based on the problems related to student learning activity that have been explained in the research background, the implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR) chose to use game-based learning "Dakword Challenge". The selection of this learning strategy has been adjusted to the needs of students, where students need to improve their learning activity through interesting and enjoyable learning. Then, in the process the teacher uses media in the form of dakon and wordwall so that this game-based learning is called "Dakword Challenge".

This learning was carried out in 2 cycles by implementing the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) type cooperative learning model. According to Rika and Radeni, the application of the TGT learning model can encourage active involvement of students in learning activities (Anjarwati & Dewi, 2025). The same opinion was also expressed by Ni'matuzzuriyah and Ervina, that the TGT learning model has been proven to be able to encourage student participation effectively in social studies learning, especially for students who like games, because it can create a calmer, more enthusiastic, focused learning atmosphere, and foster a cooperative attitude (Ni'matuzzuriyah & Ervina, 2025).

The first stage in Classroom Action Research (CAR) is planning. At this stage, the teacher designs learning tools that are tailored to the characteristics and needs of the students. Some designs that need to be prepared include: teaching modules, learning media, LKPD (Student Worksheets), and other supporting tools aimed at increasing their learning activity. Meanwhile, the learning material is related to the Indonesian spice route, and its influence on social, economic, and cultural life in the archipelago. The media used in this learning are dakon and wordwall. In this learning, the dakon media in "Dakword Challenge" has been modified by adding numbered seeds that lead to learning questions. This game contains educational and cultural values, and encourages student activity through direct involvement in the dakword challenge game.

In the second stage, namely the implementation stage (acting), activities are focused on the application of previously designed learning. The acting stage is the core part of classroom action research because it is a moment of direct trial in the classroom to determine the increase in student activity. The implementation of learning is carried out in accordance with the syntax of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) learning model which consists of five stages, namely: 1) Team: heterogeneous group division; 2) Game, activity of answering questions that have been arranged according to the learning content; 3) Tournament, competition structure in the form of a game; 4) Team Recognition, giving awards to teams that show the best performance; 5) Material, presentation of material in TGT can be done at the beginning of learning or through problem solving and group discussions during the game. Thus, this implementation stage can be called the core of active and collaborative student learning activities. In addition to implementation, at this stage observations are also carried out by the supervising teacher and colleagues who act as observers.

The results of observations during learning in Cycle I showed that students began to show their activeness, especially when the Dakword Challenge game began. However, not all students were actively involved. There were still some students who were passive and showed less enthusiasm in learning activities. Involvement in the game was also still dominated by several individuals who were more confident, while other members were only observers and had not actively contributed to the group. As a result, the overall learning activity of students has not been achieved optimally. At the beginning of the game, some students still seemed confused about the rules and mechanisms of the game, which resulted in the learning process being less than optimal. This shows that improvements are needed in terms of delivering game techniques so that students are better prepared and understand before starting the activity. Based on the results of these observations, the learning activity of students began to appear, but still needs to be improved. Therefore, improvements are needed in Cycle II, especially in terms of delivering clearer game rules before the game tournament is held, as

well as dividing individual roles in groups so that each student has the same responsibility and opportunity to participate.

The fourth stage is reflecting, this stage is a follow-up to the results of observations from cycle I and efforts to improve learning in cycle II. Based on observations from observers in cycle I, it shows that game-based learning through the Dakword Challenge shows a positive impact on students' learning activity. However, there are still several obstacles that cause learning activity to be less than optimal. First, learning activity is still dominated by students who have high self-confidence, they dare to express their opinions, are active in discussion activities, and are active in answering questions. However, some of them tend to be passive and less involved in learning. Passive students have not shown indicators of learning activity such as asking questions, discussing, solving problems, or expressing their opinions. Second, students experience confusion at the beginning of the game activity because they do not understand the mechanism or rules of the game. This results in learning not running efficiently at the beginning of the Dakword Challenge game. Based on the results of the evaluation, the corrective action for the next cycle is the delivery of the game mechanism systematically and clearly through the slide display presented at the beginning of learning. Then, the division of group roles where each individual in the group must have a special role such as: question writer, main answerer, dakon player (challenger inviter), and opponent observer. These roles must be rotated so that each student has a balanced learning experience.

Learning in Cycle II still uses the Dakword Challenge game model, but has been refined based on the results of reflection from the implementation in Cycle I. The improvements made aim to overcome obstacles that emerged previously and optimize student learning activity. Some of the improvement steps implemented include: the delivery of game mechanisms is carried out in a more structured and systematic manner with the help of interesting and easy-to-understand presentation slide media. In addition, before the game starts, the teacher conducts a short simulation to ensure that all students understand the rules of the game and the overall flow of the game. The division of roles in groups is also arranged more neatly, including role rotation which is designed so that each student has a balanced and fair learning experience in their group.

The teacher also takes an active role in facilitating interaction, especially for students who in Cycle I still show a passive attitude. The strategy used is in the form of providing open questions that provoke critical thinking, as well as verbal support that encourages students' confidence to participate. This approach has proven to be effective in creating a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Based on the results of observations conducted by mentor teachers and colleagues during the implementation of learning in Cycle II, it was seen that most students showed a significant increase in activeness. This activeness was evident from their active participation in answering questions given, involvement in group discussions, and the ability to solve various problems presented in game activities. Students who previously tended to be passive began to show the courage to be actively involved, both in playing Dakword Challenge, answering questions, and expressing opinions during group discussions.

In addition, the implementation of role rotation in groups was effective, thus giving each student an equal opportunity to play a role and contribute actively. Students' understanding of the rules of the game also increased significantly compared to the previous cycle, so that the implementation of Dakword Challenge was smoother, more efficient, and had minimal technical obstacles.

From the results of observations made, it can be concluded that various indicators of learning activeness such as involvement in doing assignments, problem-solving skills, initiative to ask questions, participation in discussions, and efforts to find and apply the information obtained have been achieved well in Cycle II. This shows that the improvements implemented have had a positive impact on the quality of learning and are able to create a more lively, participatory, and meaningful learning atmosphere.

The implementation of the learning process from cycle I to cycle II shows positive developments in student learning activity. Learning through dakword challenges has been proven to create an interactive, enjoyable learning atmosphere, and encourage active student involvement in the learning process.

Table 2. Student learning activity

No.	Category of Student Learning Activity	Cycle I		Cycle II	
		F	%	F	%
1.	High	3	9,68%	19	61,29%
2.	Medium	21	67,75%	10	32,26
3.	Low	7	22,58%	2	6,45%
4.	Very Low	0	0	0	0

Based on the data above, in cycle I, the learning activity of participants was dominated by the medium category, namely 21 students (67.75%). This shows that most students are starting to show learning activity, although not optimally. Meanwhile, 3 students are in the high category or 9.68% who show consistent learning activity. However, there are still 7 students (22.58%) in the low learning activity category. The increase in student learning activity occurred quite significantly after the improvements from cycle I were applied in cycle II learning. In cycle II, students in the high category increased to 19 students (61.29%). This shows the success of the improvements that have been made in Dakword Challenge game-based learning. On the other hand, students in the medium category are 10 students (32.26%) and the low category are 2 students (6.45%).

Table 3. Student Learning Activity Score

No.	Description	Cycle I	Cycle II
1.	Lowest Score	7	13
2.	Highest Score	21	26
3.	Average	57%	75%
4.	Category	Medium activity	High activity

In the data above, there is an increase in the score of student learning activity from cycle I to cycle II. In cycle I, the lowest score was 7 and the highest score was 21, with an average activity of 57% which is included in the moderate activity category. After improvements were made, in Cycle II the lowest score increased to 13 and the highest score reached 26, with an average activity increasing to 75% and included in the high activity category. This increase shows that the implementation of Dakword Challenge game-based learning has a positive impact on student learning activity as a whole

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the use of game-based learning Dakword Challenge has a positive effect on increasing student learning activity. This is reinforced by research from Nabila Putriani and Rudy Gunawan which explains that the use of interactive wordwall games can have a positive effect on student learning activity, as well as present a more exciting and enjoyable classroom atmosphere (Putriani & Gunawan, 2023). Research from Sahidan and Listyo also states that the use of wordwalls in learning can increase the active involvement of students, and can increase student motivation and participation in learning (Ghozali & Irawan, 2024). In addition, the use of interactive game media such as Wordwall makes a positive contribution to improving the quality of learning carried out by teachers. This media can provide a more interesting and enjoyable learning experience for students (Fidya et al., 2021).

Game-based learning approaches have shown promise in improving student engagement and learning outcomes in social studies education. Studies have demonstrated increased student activity and participation through the use of educational games like Quizizz in online learning environments (Suriyanti, 2021). Implementation of game-based models led to significant improvements in student learning outcomes, with one study reporting an increase from 73% to 95% of students reaching minimum competency levels (Darmi, 2022). Another study found that game-based learning raised student achievement from 58.8% to 100% over two cycles (Carli Wiseza et al., 2023). Active learning strategies like Index Card Match have also proven effective, with one study showing an increase in student activity from 61.56% to 96.57% over two cycles (Azhariyah, 2018). Using crossword puzzles as a learning media improved student learning outcomes in social studies for 9th grade students (Darmi, 2022). The picture guessing game method can improve students' activities and learning outcomes in social science classes (Sugio, 2019). Android-based educational games can improve elementary school students' learning outcomes in social science (Hanifah et al., 2022). Using Wordwall-based digital learning games can improve students' social studies learning outcomes (Jasmi et al., 2024). These findings suggest that incorporating game elements and interactive approaches can enhance student engagement and performance in social studies classrooms.

Based on the results of the implementation and observation of learning during two cycles, it can be seen that the implementation of Dakword Challenge game-based learning gradually has a real positive impact on increasing student learning activity in social studies subjects. In Cycle I, most students showed a level of learning activity that was still classified as moderate to low. This was caused by a number of technical constraints, such as the lack of clarity in conveying the rules of the game and the suboptimal management of time and division of roles in groups. However, through reflection and analysis of learning outcomes in Cycle I, then implementing a number of strategic improvements in Cycle II, there was a significant increase in learning activity indicators. Students showed more active involvement, both in answering questions, participating in group discussions, and in completing game-based assignments. The presence of interactive digital media such as Wordwall and the

implementation of role rotation in groups are important elements that help encourage equal participation and a more dynamic learning experience.

In cycle II, the classroom atmosphere became more lively and conducive. Collaboration between students increased, previously passive student involvement began to appear more positive, and the learning process became more meaningful. The use of a structured game approach in the Dakword Challenge also facilitates increased motivation and self-confidence in students, because they feel directly involved in a fun and healthy competitive learning process.

Thus, Dakword Challenge game-based learning can be recommended as an alternative innovative learning strategy that is effective in increasing student learning activity in social studies subjects. This model not only creates a collaborative and interactive learning atmosphere, but is also able to bridge the needs of students for contextual learning variations that are in accordance with the characteristics of today's digital generation.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out through two cycles, it can be concluded that game-based learning "Dakword Challenge" is able to increase the learning activity of students in the IX grade social studies subject. This increase can be seen from significant changes in the category of student learning activity, namely in cycle I most students are in the medium and low categories, while in cycle II there is an increase in the number of students in the high category and a significant decrease in the medium and low categories. The learning strategy that combines elements of the traditional dakon game, Wordwall digital media, and the Teams Games Tournament type cooperative approach has proven effective in presenting a fun, interactive learning atmosphere, and increasing the learning activity of all students. The increase in activity is also supported by a clear division of roles in groups and a more systematic delivery of game rules, thus encouraging active participation even from previously passive students. This finding is in line with the research objective to increase learning activity through learning innovation. Therefore, the Dakword Challenge model is worthy of being used as an innovative alternative in the social studies learning process, and has the potential to be adapted to other subjects and levels of education in order to improve the quality of learning as a whole. We would like to thank the Teacher Education Study Program of the Postgraduate School of Malang State University for funding this activity.

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