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The Effect of Using Comic Media in Social Sciences Subjects on Students Critical Thinking Abilities

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Abstrak

Saat ini siswa dituntut untuk memiliki keterampilan abad saat ini, keterampilan berpikir kritis termasuk ke dalam kompetensi mendasar yang harus dikuasai karena membentuk peserta didik agar mempunyai kemampuan analitis, pemecahan masalah, serta kesadaran sosial dalam pembelajaran IPS. Namun, pemanfaatan media seperti komik sebagai media pembelajaran IPS di sekolah untuk masih terbatas. Berdasarkan kondisi tersebut, tujuan penelitian ialah mengkaji pengaruh penggunaan media komik pada pelajaran IPS terhadap kemampuan berpikir kritis. Penelitian menggunakan dengan pendekatan kuantitatif menggunakan jenis penelitian kuasi eksperimen *non-equivalent control group design*. Penelitian berlangsung di SMPN 2 Alalak. Teknik pengumpulan data ada dua tahapan yaitu angket serta tes. Teknik analisis data yang diterapkan yaitu statistik deskriptif, asumsi dasar, serta hipotesis. Berdasarkan analisis dengan software SPSS pada data posttest memperoleh sig.(2-tailed) dengan nilai 0.00 < 0.05, hingga H0 ditolak serta H1 diterima, hingga adanya pembeda signifikan antar skor kelas eksperimen serta kontrol setelah perlakuan. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa pemanfaatan media komik terdapat pengaruh positif terhadap meningkatnya kemampuan berpikir kritis. Hasil penelitian ini konsisten serta memperkuat pemahaman bahwa penggunaan media komik dalam pembelajaran IPS bukan hanya sebagai alat bantu visual semata, melainkan sebagai strategi pembelajaran yang dapat mendorong keterlibatan aktif, pemikiran reflektif, dan pengambilan keputusan logis peserta didik. Media komik memberikan konteks belajar yang lebih dekat kepada kehidupan sehari-hari peserta didik, terbuat materi sosial menjadi lebih hidup serta konkret, serta memungkinkan peserta didik untuk membangun hubungan antara teks, gambar, dan realitas sosial yang mereka alami.
Kata kunci: Berpikir kritis, media komik, Pendidikan IPS

Abstract

Currently, students are required to have 21st-century skills, and critical thinking skills are one of the important competencies that must be possessed because they shape students to have analytical skills, problem-solving skills, and social awareness in social studies learning. However, the use of media such as comics as a medium for social studies learning in schools is still limited. Based on these conditions, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect of using comics as a medium in social studies lessons on critical thinking skills. This study used a quantitative approach with a non-equivalent control group quasi-experimental research design. The research was conducted at SMPN 2 Alalak. There were two

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stages of data collection techniques, namely questionnaires and tests. The data analysis techniques applied were descriptive statistics, basic assumptions, and hypotheses. Based on the analysis using SPSS software on the posttest data, a sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 < 0.05 was obtained, meaning that H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted, indicating a significant difference between the scores of the experimental and control classes after the treatment. These findings indicate that the use of comic media has a positive effect on improving critical thinking skills. The results of this study are consistent and reinforce the understanding that the use of comic media in social studies learning is not only a visual aid, but also a learning strategy that can encourage active engagement, reflective thinking, and logical decision-making among students. Comic media provide a learning context that is closer to the daily lives of students, making social material more vivid and concrete, and enabling students to build connections between text, images, and the social reality they experience.
Keywords: Critical thinking, comic media, social studies education

Preliminary

In this era, students are required to have various 21st-century skills, with critical thinking skills being among the most important competencies to have, as they aim to foster a habit of not accepting things at face value. Students are encouraged to always double-check what they hear and evaluate their own way of thinking, just like an editor looking for errors in a manuscript (Maulana et al., 2024). There are five key indicators in the implementation of critical thinking. These indicators are conveying simple descriptions, developing basic skills, making conclusions, formulating further explanations, and developing strategies and tactics (Rizarizki et al., 2021).

These abilities are important for facing global challenges and solving problems in real life (Yusup et al., 2024). Unfortunately, various survey results show low critical thinking skills among Indonesian students (Prayogi & Verawati, 2024). Attractively designed learning is expected to provide support for improving students' critical thinking skills. This is necessary for every student because it plays a role in helping them find solutions to various problems they face (Saputera et al., 2024).

This fact confirms that improving critical thinking skills is an urgent need, especially in Social Sciences (IPS) lessons, which serve to foster analytical skills, problem solving, and social awareness (Rahman et al., 2024). Meaningful IPS learning should encourage students to be active, critical, and able to relate the material to real life. Kosasih (1979) states that social studies learning has a crucial role in helping students recognize and solve various problems they face. Through this learning, students are expected to be able to understand the social conditions around them more comprehensively and increase their awareness of the dynamics that occur in society (Rahardjo, n.d.).

Powerful social studies learning is meaningful, integrated, challenging, valuable, and active, providing students with direct experience. The goal of social studies learning is for students to be able to understand the social world in depth, have problem-solving skills, and be

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able to apply the knowledge they have gained in real life (Abbas et al., 2024). Critical thinking skills are among the main characteristics of powerful social studies learning, as they encourage students not only to memorize concepts, but also to develop their ability to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on various social issues they face.

According to (Maulidah et al., 2024). learning media refers to tangible and intangible tools that are consciously used as a bridge between students and teachers for learning activities. The purpose of using this media is to make it easier for students to understand the subject matter more quickly and accurately (Ilmy et al., 2024). Simply put, learning media not only accelerates the learning process but also plays a role in increasing learning motivation (Saswili et al., 2024).

Media by design is a form of learning innovation that emphasizes the importance of creativity and the relevance of media to instructional objectives. The use of media by design, such as educational comics in social studies, not only enriches the methods of delivering material but also improves students' critical thinking skills (Zulfah, 2025). This is in line with the modern learning paradigm, which requires the active involvement of students in learning through interactive, contextual, and meaningful media.

Potential learning media for improving these skills include comics. Comics are considered effective because they are able to combine visual and textual elements in an interesting way, as well as helping to convey educational messages in a simple and easy-to-understand manner (Wijayanti et al., 2024). In addition to increasing interest in learning, comics also encourage students' critical thinking skills through activities such as analyzing story content, evaluating characters' actions, and drawing conclusions based on the narrative flow (Sulistriyaniva & Gunansyah, n.d.). Several studies show that comics can facilitate students in conveying explanations, forming basic skills, summarizing, explaining further, and organizing critical thinking strategies (Wijayanti et al., 2024).

However, the use of comics as a learning medium in schools, especially in social studies learning, is still limited (Sulistriyaniva & Gunansyah, n.d.). Based on observations at SMPN 2 Alalak, it was found that critical thinking skills in social studies lessons were still low. As a result, students had difficulty understanding the material, tended to be passive, and were unable to analyze social issues critically (Ananda et al., n.d.).

The purpose of this study was to apply the use of comics in grade 7 at SMPN 2 Alalak, with the hope of making social studies lessons more interesting, interactive, and useful for the development of this learning medium (Pd et al., n.d.).

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Method

The researchers used a quantitative approach and applied a non-equivalent control group quasi-experimental design. According to Rukminingsih et al. (2020), the design used two groups, an experimental class and a control class, selected using a deliberate placement technique. Both groups underwent pre-tests and post-tests, but only the experimental class received treatment.

The research was conducted at SMPN 2 Alalak South Kalimantan, in the even semester of 2024/2025. The population consisted of all 7th grade students at SMPN 2 Alalak, totaling 151 students in 5 classes. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, which is a non-random approach that considers certain characteristics or requirements (Nugrohowardhani, 2022). The sample obtained was 7A as the experimental group and 7B as the control group, so that there were 61 students in the sample.

Data collection in this study was carried out in two ways, namely through questionnaires and tests. Questionnaires were used to obtain data on students' responses to the use of comic media in social studies lessons. In this study, a Likert scale was used for the questionnaires. The tests in this study evaluated and obtained results from pre-tests and post-tests to measure the improvement in critical thinking skills. In this study, the tests consisted of essay questions for grade 7 students at SMPN 2 Alalak, Barito Kuala Regency.

The analysis techniques applied were descriptive statistical analysis, basic assumption testing, and hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to examine the role of comic media in students' critical thinking skills, applying analysis of the mean, min, max, std devian, and range. Basic assumption analysis was used for the prerequisites in hypothesis testing, which aimed to ensure that the instruments were normal and related to the analysis, normality test, and homogeneity. Meanwhile, hypothesis analysis was applied to test the researcher's hypothesis using the t-test and N-Gain test (Asari et al., 2023; Sukarelawan et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

Social studies lessons on socio-cultural issues using comics were conducted in class 7A (experimental) and class 7B (control). This study was conducted over a period of three meetings for each class. Each learning session had a different agenda and objective. In the first session, a pretest was conducted as a reference to determine the students' initial abilities before they were given treatment through learning with comics on local history material. The second session was conducted by applying comics as a form of treatment in the experimental class, while in the control class, learning was conducted without comics. The third meeting was also the closing meeting with a post-test aimed at obtaining an overview of whether or not the use of comic media had an effect on students' critical thinking skills. From this series of studies, the following findings were obtained from the pre-test and post-test data related to students' critical thinking skills:

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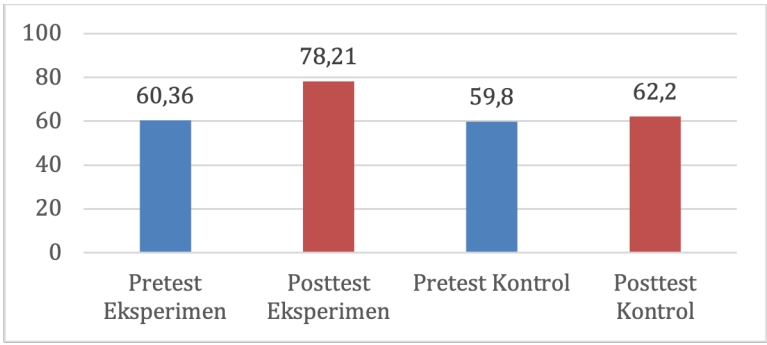

Figure 1. Graph comparing pretest-posttest average scores for critical thinking skills

Based on the graph above, descriptive statistical analysis shows that the average critical thinking score for the experimental class was 60.36 for the pretest and 78.21 for the posttest, while the control class scored 59.8 for the pretest and 62.2 for the posttest. After obtaining the pretest and posttest scores, a normality test was conducted. A normality test is an analysis procedure aimed at determining the distribution of data in a group or variable under study. Through this test, it can be determined whether the data has a normal distribution or not, so that the results can be used as a basis for the next analysis step. This study used the Shapiro-Wilk test because the amount of data analyzed was less than 50 samples (Asari et al., 2023).

Table 1. Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Eksperimental Class	,120	28	,200	,941	28	,117
Control Class	,142	25	,200	,931	25	,094

Based on the findings of the normality test in Table 1, the Shapiro Wilk value for the pretest and posttest as critical thinking skills was 0.117 > 0.05. In the control class, the sig value for the pretest and posttest was 0.094 > 0.05. Thus, it shows that the pretest and posttest data in that class are normally distributed, and the homogeneity test can be carried out. The homogeneity test aims to determine whether the results of several variants are similar. This test can only be used if the data being analyzed is normally distributed (Asari et al., 2023).

Table 2. Homogenity Test

Levene Statistic	Df1	Df2	Sig.
7,790	1	51	,007

Referring to the data in Table 2, it shows the posttest scores in critical thinking skills for the experimental and control classes obtained a Sig. value from the Levene Statistic of 0.007. Thus, the test result is sig < 0.05, so it can be concluded that the data obtained is not homogeneous (not the same), then further testing is carried out, namely hypothesis testing using an independent sample t-test. The causal results were obtained by comparing the difference in results between the control group and the experimental group, thus obtaining the significance of the difference between the groups. The independent sample t-test was used because the test was conducted on two different groups (Sukarelawan et al., 2024).

The basis for decision making in hypothesis testing with a significance level of 5% with $\alpha = 0.05$ is that Ho is rejected if the significance (sig) is < 0.05, while Ha is accepted if the significance (sig) is > 0.05. The t-test is used to determine whether there is a significant

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difference between the experimental and control classes. The t-test was conducted using the SPSS program. The hypotheses in this study are:

Ho: There is no effect of the use of comic media in social studies lessons on students' critical thinking skills.

Ha: There is an effect of the use of comic media in social studies lessons on students' critical thinking skills.

Table 3. hypothesis test

	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances Assumed	7,79	,007	4,558	51	,000
Equal variances not assumed			4,677	45,62	,000

Referring to the findings above from the independent sample t-test, we obtained a sig. (2-tailed) of 0.00 < 0.05. This condition indicates that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted, leading to the conclusion that there is a significant difference between critical thinking skills in the experimental and control classes. Therefore, students in the experimental class who used comic media showed an increase in critical thinking skills compared to students in the control class.

The social studies learning process requires media that can attract students' attention and facilitate their understanding of the material being taught. One of the media that can be applied is comics. Comics have the advantage of presenting information visually through attractive images and dialogues, thereby creating a more enjoyable and varied learning environment. The use of comics in social studies lessons is not limited to entertainment, but also as an effective educational medium for conveying complex material in a simple and easy-to-understand manner. Comics can help students relate historical events to real-life contexts and encourage their active involvement in the learning process.

This comic tells the story of the struggle of Prince Antasari, a national hero from South Kalimantan, who fought fiercely against Dutch colonialism in the Banjar War. Using attractive visuals and simple language, this comic takes readers on a journey through the twists and turns of Prince Antasari's life, from his difficult childhood and royal family conflicts to the peak of his struggle leading the Banjar people's resistance.

The story begins with an introduction to the historical background of the prosperous but internally conflicted Banjar kingdom. Prince Antasari, who was exiled from the palace, grew up to be a determined and courageous warrior. This comic describes the stages of the struggle, from gathering troops and guerrilla tactics to the great battle against the Dutch, which continued even after the prince died of an epidemic. This comic not only provides visual entertainment but also contains moral messages about perseverance, courage, and the importance of unity in the face of colonialism. Complete with infographics of the struggle, a glossary, rhymes, and biographies, this comic is designed as an informative and enjoyable medium for students to learn history.

The use of comics, which contain the story of Prince Antasari, is highly relevant to the critical thinking skill indicator of conveying simple explanations. These comics effectively simplify complex historical events into easy-to-understand narratives. The information is presented in sequence, starting from the background of the Banjar kingdom, the background of Prince Antasari's family, to the conflict with the Dutch colonists. The use of dialogue between characters makes it easier for students to understand the storyline. Building basic skills, this comic encourages students to develop basic skills in understanding historical information. In this comic, students are introduced to the names of characters, locations of events, and specific times of events. In conclusion, through the storyline presented, this comic encourages students

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to draw conclusions about the causes and effects of historical events. Students can observe that Dutch interference in the internal conflicts of the Banjar kingdom triggered resistance from the people. Providing further explanation, this comic not only presents stories from the past, but also encourages students to think more deeply about the meaning of heroism in the present day. The comic clearly depicts the process of developing war strategies and tactics. Prince Antasari is portrayed as an intelligent leader in devising strategies.

The Prince Antasari comic is an effective learning medium for developing critical thinking skills in social studies lessons. Each indicator of critical thinking is well represented in the storyline and illustrations of this comic. In addition to introducing history in an interesting way, this comic also invites students to reflect on heroic values and how they can be applied in everyday life. Thus, this comic is not only a medium of entertainment, but also a profound and meaningful educational tool.

Overall, the study found that comic books achieved an average rating of 81.17% in the Good category from respondents in the experimental class. This proves that comic media is a learning innovation that is not only interesting and enjoyable, but also effective in developing students' cognitive and critical thinking skills. This effectiveness proves that conventional learning needs to be supported by media approaches that are more suited to the learning styles of today's students. According to Mulyasa (2023), social studies learning in the Merdeka Curriculum is aimed at developing students' cognitive, emotional, and social competencies comprehensively. Comic media meets this need by providing interactive learning experiences, triggering positive emotions, and enriching students' knowledge and insights.

Learning media plays an important role as a means of communication in teaching and learning activities. As explained by Saleh et al. (2023) and Arsyad (2011) in Hasan et al. (2021), learning media is a tool that can increase the effectiveness of delivering material to students, particularly in helping them understand information better. Thus, comics, as a form of visual media, have strong potential in presenting social studies material in an interesting, communicative, and easy-to-understand manner. Comics combine images and text in a cohesive narrative, providing a more enjoyable and meaningful learning context.

Based on the functions of learning media according to Levi & Lentz in Riza Rizki et al. (2021), comics are capable of performing four important functions in supporting the learning process. The attention function can be seen from how students are more interested in paying attention to material presented in the form of picture stories. The affective function can be seen from the increased interest and motivation of students towards social studies material, because comic media can evoke emotional involvement through narratives and illustrations that are close to their experiences. The cognitive function is realized when students can understand and remember the material well through visualization, while the compensatory function can be seen in the ease with which students understand information that was previously abstract or difficult to explain verbally.

Based on the critical thinking indicators according to Ennis (2018) in Sari et al. (2021), comic media can facilitate the achievement of five critical thinking indicators for students, namely delivering simple descriptions, developing basic skills, making conclusions, formulating further explanations, and developing strategies and tactics. This can be seen in the activities of students during learning, where they not only read the contents of the comic but also analyze social conflicts, evaluate the actions of the characters, make predictions about the storyline, and discuss solutions to the issues raised. Thus, comics indirectly become a medium for practicing critical thinking that is applicable in the context of social studies material.

The characteristics of critical thinking as described by Emily R. Lai (2011) in the book by Zakiah & Lestari (2019) and Fisher (2008) in Suarjana, (2020), students are required to analyze the arguments in the story, evaluate the characters' points of view, and formulate alternative solutions to problems in accordance with the social context presented in the comic.

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This activity trains them not only to passively receive information, but also to actively process it logically and reflectively. This ability is very important in social studies learning, which emphasizes the analysis of social phenomena and the development of a critical attitude towards everyday events.

The use of comics as a measure of students' critical thinking skills involved the use of pre-tests and post-tests. Before the learning process, the experimental and control classes were given a pre-test to determine their initial critical thinking skills in social studies. The average pretest score in the experimental class reached 60.36 out of a total of 28 students, while in the control class, the average score was 59.80 out of 25 students. The difference in the average between the two classes was 0.56, indicating that the initial abilities of the students in both classes were equivalent, so the difference was very small and insignificant.

After the pretest, the next stage was to apply the treatment to both the experimental and control classes. The experimental class was given learning media, while the control class used conventional learning activities. In this case, the experimental class used comics as learning media, while the control class used conventional face-to-face learning methods without the support of such media. Both treatments aimed to determine the extent to which these approaches improved critical thinking skills. The results of both learning methods will be compared to measure which strategy is effective in improving critical thinking.

After the treatment was administered, the next stage was to administer a posttest to measure the results after the treatment was applied. Based on the posttest, the experimental class obtained an average score of 78.21. Meanwhile, the control class obtained an average score of 62.20. The data concluded that there was a significant difference between the posttest results of the two classes.

The data obtained from the initial test (pretest) and final test (posttest) were collected and analyzed. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test, with prerequisites that included testing for normality and homogeneity. In the normality testing stage, the significance of the posttest for the experimental and control classes was also greater than 0.05, namely 0.117 > 0.05 and 0.094 > 0.05. Because all sig. values were > 0.05, it was concluded that the pretest and posttest for the experimental and control classes were normally distributed. The posttest result, 0.007 < 0.05, indicates that the data is not homogeneous. This condition reflects a comparison of the increase in results between the experimental and control classes after the treatment was given.

Hypothesis testing was carried out using an independent sample t-test in the form of a comparison of the means between the experimental and control classes, both of which met the assumptions of normal distribution. Based on the analysis using SPSS software on the posttest data, a sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.00 < 0.05 was obtained, so H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted. This indicates a clear difference between the scores of the experimental and control classes after the treatment. These findings indicate that the use of comic media has a positive effect on increasing students' critical thinking skills.

Referring to previous theories and findings, it can be concluded that the results of this study are consistent and reinforce the understanding that the use of comic media in social studies learning is not only a visual aid but also a learning strategy that can encourage active engagement, reflective thinking, and logical decision-making by students. Comic media provide a learning context that is closer to the daily lives of students, making social material more vivid and concrete, and enabling students to build connections between text, images, and the social reality they experience. Therefore, comic media have been proven to contribute positively to the improvement of critical thinking in students, while also strengthening the quality of social studies in general.

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Conclusion

This study proves that the use of comic media has a significant effect on the critical thinking skills of students in social studies lessons with social and cultural issues in grade 7 at SMPN 2 Alalak. The results were obtained from an independent sample t-test with a sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.00 < 0.05, showing a significant difference between the experimental class that used comics and the control class. The increase in the average pretest and posttest scores in the experimental class was higher (60.36 to 78.21) than in the control class (59.80 to 62.20). The Pangeran Antasari comic proved to facilitate the achievement of critical thinking indicators through the presentation of material that was coherent, interesting, and communicative, so that learning became more contextual, meaningful, and able to encourage students to think analytically and reflectively about social studies material.

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