Enhancing Empathy and Tolerance in Social Studies Learning through Internet-Based Media: A Case Study at Moahino Elementary School

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study addresses the urgent need to foster empathy and tolerance in Social Studies (IPS) learning, especially within the Proclamation of Independence theme often neglected in traditional teaching. It aims to examine the effectiveness of internet-based media in developing these social values among fifth-grade students at SDN Moahino. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study involved 10 students, a homeroom teacher, the principal, and several subject teachers selected purposively. Data were gathered through observations, interviews, and documentation over two learning cycles and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model with triangulation for validity. Results showed that in the first cycle, the use of internet media had little impact on students' attitudes, while in the second cycle, significant improvement occurred. Students exhibited higher empathy—respecting teachers, helping peers, and giving praise—and greater tolerance by cooperating without discrimination, avoiding bullying, and appreciating others' opinions. The study concludes that internet-based media, particularly educational videos, effectively enhance empathy and tolerance when applied systematically and aligned with character education. Broader and more creative use of digital content is recommended to strengthen values-based learning in elementary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of internet-based media has profoundly transformed the landscape of modern education (Djurayev, 2024). This transformation extends beyond the cognitive dimension of learning to include the affective realm, where values such as empathy and tolerance play an essential role in shaping students' character and moral development (Manikandan, 2025). Digital technologies today enable educators to cultivate these affective competencies, fostering social understanding and civic responsibility qualities that define the foundation of global citizenship (Salsabila et al., 2020;

Shodiq, 2020) Among the various technological innovations, video-based learning platforms, particularly YouTube (Carvalho et al., 2020). Have emerged as some of the most widely used tools due to their accessibility, multimodal nature, and ability to enhance student engagement, reflection, and emotional connection (Greenhow, & Lewin, 2020; Herodotou., 2019). Beyond serving as instructional aids, digital media have become instrumental in shaping students' values and moral reasoning through exposure to diverse perspectives and cultural narratives (Pandey, 2024).

Despite growing interest in this area, much of the existing research on digital media integration in education remains largely descriptive. Previous studies have tended to emphasize improvements in motivation, participation, and cognitive achievement, while paying limited attention to the character-building potential of digital platforms. Few studies have explicitly explored how video-based media can be strategically designed to develop empathy and tolerance in multicultural learning contexts (Cano., 2022). Moreover, many lack a clear theoretical or methodological explanation of how such media influence students' affective growth (Sun & Wu, 2023). This gap highlights the need for a more structured, theory-informed, and empirically tested framework for integrating digital media as a pedagogical tool for value-based education (Li, & Peng, 2021)

Erstad et al., (2024) emphasized that digital environments have great potential in fostering social-emotional and moral learning. Huston, (2022) also found that social media use can increase empathy when combined with reflective discussion activities. Domínguez-Whitehead & Moosa, (2020) demonstrated how digital storytelling fosters social justice awareness and intercultural understanding among students. Jia, Way, & Ling (2023) further reported that structured digital interventions improve students' socio-emotional learning outcomes. While these studies confirm the role of technology in affective learning, very few have investigated how internet-based video media can be systematically integrated into thematic instruction especially in Social Studies to cultivate empathy and tolerance within specific cultural and educational contexts (Riner et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, Social Studies (Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial or IPS) serves as a crucial platform for fostering civic literacy, moral awareness, and social sensitivity among students (Yusnaldi et al., 2022). One of its key themes, the Proclamation of Independence, holds significant potential for promoting national identity, unity, and collective responsibility. However, the teaching of this theme in elementary schools often remains limited to rote memorization of historical facts, emphasizing recall over critical engagement or moral reflection (Wineburg, 2018). Such traditional, fact-based approaches tend to portray history as a fixed narrative rather than as a complex, multi-perspective process shaped by diverse actors and interpretations (LePoire, 2025). This reductionist view risks hindering students' ability to appreciate difference, diversity, and human struggle all of which are central to the development of empathy and tolerance (Venegas, 2024).

The Proclamation of Independence also offers a rich entry point for value-based education due to its combination of unity and controversy Ngalimun., (2022). The historical event encompasses contested interpretations, regional variations, and multiple cultural perspectives on freedom and nationhood (Ruhushandy, 2025). When presented through internet-based video media that capture these varied viewpoints, the topic can stimulate reflection, emotional engagement, and perspective-taking among learners (Morisson et al., 2024). According to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, students can internalize prosocial behaviors such as empathy, respect, and cooperation by observing modeled actions through visual media (Salama, 2025). Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning explains that the integration of visual and verbal information enhances both comprehension and emotional resonance, making video-based media especially powerful for socio-affective learning (Idrus, 2023).

This study aims to address both theoretical and practical gaps by investigating how internet-based video media specifically YouTube can enhance empathy and tolerance in elementary Social Studies learning. Conducted at Moahino Elementary School in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, this research focuses on fifth-grade students in a culturally diverse environment that includes Bungku, Javanese, Bugis, Mori, Tolaki, Balinese, and Bajo ethnic groups. Preliminary classroom observations revealed low

levels of empathy and tolerance, as reflected in behaviors such as ethnic teasing, lack of cooperation, and disrespect toward teachers. These findings highlight the urgency of developing a learning model that promotes inclusivity, reflection, and moral growth among young learners.

The novelty of this study lies in three interrelated dimensions that distinguish it from previous research. First, the video content integration method applies a systematic approach by embedding YouTube videos within two instructional cycles under the theme of the Proclamation of Independence. This method ensures alignment between digital content, learning objectives, and emotional outcomes, allowing iterative reflection and behavioral observation over time. Second, the selection of video types focuses deliberately on diverse and, in some cases, controversial portrayals of Indonesian independence, encouraging students to explore multiple perspectives and engage in reflective dialogue. This focus on controversial and multicultural narratives distinguishes the study from prior research that used general or non-contextualized educational videos. Third, the evaluative framework introduces validated indicators for measuring empathy (such as helping peers, respecting teachers, offering praise) and tolerance (such as collaborating without discrimination, avoiding bullying, and appreciating differing opinions). These indicators were tested through triangulation of sources, methods, and time, ensuring empirical rigor and analytical reliability.

By integrating these three dimensions, this study moves beyond descriptive accounts of digital media use and establishes a replicable model for affective pedagogy. The findings are expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical domains: theoretically, by advancing understanding of how video-based instruction supports socio-emotional development; and practically, by offering educators a structured framework for using multimedia tools to strengthen character education.

Aligned with the global discourse on holistic education, this study positions internet-based media not merely as a cognitive aid but as an agent of transformative moral learning. Through carefully selected and pedagogically integrated video content, the study demonstrates how technology can humanize historical learning, foster empathy and tolerance, and build intercultural awareness among students. As the educational paradigm increasingly embraces inclusivity and value-oriented learning, this research contributes empirical evidence and conceptual clarity on how digital media can shape not only what students learn but also who they become compassionate, open-minded, and socially responsible individuals.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how internet-based video media can foster empathy and tolerance in Social Studies (IPS) learning. Although implemented across two instructional cycles, the study was not categorized as classroom action research but as a descriptive exploration of changes in students' social attitudes. The use of video was guided by three considerations. Theoretically, it drew upon Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Mayer's (2009) multimedia learning theory, which emphasize the role of modeling and visual verbal integration in shaping behavior and reflection. A needs analysis revealed low levels of empathy and tolerance among students, particularly in ethnically diverse interactions, while the IPS curriculum emphasizes not only historical knowledge but also civic values and character formation. These factors positioned the Proclamation of Independence theme as a suitable entry point for value-based learning.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, including the principal, homeroom teacher, several subject teachers, and ten fifth-grade students at SDN Moahino. Data were collected during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year through non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, supported by secondary sources such as books, journals, and school records. Observation indicators for empathy (e.g., showing respect, helping peers, giving appreciation) and tolerance (e.g., cooperating without discrimination, respecting opinions, avoiding bullying) were adapted from prior studies Li & Zhu, (2022) and validated through expert judgment by two IPS educators and one education researcher to ensure content validity. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Findings

were presented in descriptive narratives complemented by quantitative tables showing frequencies and percentages of observed behaviors. To ensure trustworthiness, triangulation of sources, methods, and time was applied.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the extent to which the use of the internet particularly through video-based media can enhance the empathy and tolerance of fifth-grade students at SDN Moahino during social studies (IPS) lessons on the theme of the Proclamation of Independence. The integration of digital media is expected to provide a more contextualized understanding of social values, thereby encouraging positive behavioral changes among students. The research findings are presented across two learning cycles, focusing on specific indicators of empathy and tolerance as observed and recorded by teachers using observation sheets.

3.1 Enhancing Students' Empathy

1. Respecting the Rights of Others

The use of internet media in IPS lessons has shown to foster an increase in students' empathetic behaviors, particularly in respecting the rights of others. Observed indicators include students' respectful conduct toward teachers, adherence to discussion rules, and attentiveness during instruction. One key observation was as follows:

Table 4.1 Showing Respect to Teachers through Handshakes and Hand-Kissing Gestures

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	50	50
Meeting II	50	50	0	0

Based on the table above, at the first meeting, most teachers (100%) stated that students had little or very little respect for teachers. However, at the second meeting, there was a significant increase, all students showed good and very good attitudes in respecting teachers.

Table 4.2 Obeying the rules in group discussions by not talking to themselves

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	60	40
Meeting II	60	40	0	0

The observation results showed a clear shift, where initially students were not able to obey the discussion rules, but after learning using internet media, the majority showed better discipline.

Table 4.3 Paying attention to the explanation given by the teacher with eyes looking towards the front of the class

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	70	30
Meeting II	70	30	0	0

From the table above, it can be seen that students' attention to teachers increased drastically from initially lacking/very lacking to very good and good after intervention through internet learning media.

2. Respecting the Rights of Others

The use of internet media in improving the empathy of SDN Moahino students can also be seen in the aspect of respecting the rights of others. The three indicators observed reflect how students express appreciation and support for classmates in the context of presentations or group discussions:

Table 4.4 Congratulating friends for their courage to present in front of the class

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	80	20
Meeting II	80	20	0	0

In the first meeting, the majority of teachers stated that students were lacking or very lacking in congratulating friends who dared to perform. However, after the use of internet media in cycle II, students' attitudes increased sharply with 80% being considered very good and 20% being good.

Table 4.5 Giving encouragement (applause) to friends who represent their group in the presentation

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	80	20
Meeting II	80	20	0	0

The data shows that students initially showed less supportive attitudes towards friends during presentations. However, in the second meeting there was a significant change, with all students showing high enthusiasm in giving support in the form of applause.

Table 4.6 Giving praise for friends' courage to express their opinions.

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	50	50
Meeting II	50	50	0	0

Students in the first meeting tended to be unaccustomed to giving praise to their friends. However, at the second meeting, the use of inspirational learning videos succeeded in encouraging half of the students to start actively giving praise, and the other half were in the good category.

3. Having a Caring Attitude Towards Others

The aspect of social concern is an important part in forming an attitude of empathy. In this study, the use of internet media is also directed at fostering students' concern for their classmates, both in terms of studying and simple assistance such as lending stationery. The following are the results of the observations:

Table 4.7 Reminding friends to be serious in studying by reprimanding when talking to themselves

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	60	40
Meeting II	60	40	0	0

At meeting I, all teachers stated that students were lacking to very lacking in reprimanding friends who were not serious about studying. After implementing video-based learning, 60% of students showed a very good attitude and 40% were good in politely reprimanding friends during discussions.

Table 4.8 Helping friends understand the material

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	80	20
Meeting II	80	20	0	0

Initially, most students did not have the initiative to help friends who had difficulty learning. However, at the second meeting, a major change occurred with 80% of teachers assessing students as very good at helping to re-explain the material to their friends.

Table 4.9 Lending stationery to friends

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	10	10	80
Meeting II	80	0	10	0

Students' attitudes in helping friends through simple actions such as lending stationery also increased. If previously 80% of teachers assessed students as very uncaring, then at the second meeting 80% of teachers stated that students were very good in this regard.

3.2 Improving Student Tolerance

This study also highlights efforts to improve students' tolerance attitudes through internet-based learning in the social studies subject with the theme of the proclamation. Student tolerance was observed based on seven indicators, and the results of observations were carried out by 10 teachers in two meetings. The following is a description of the results of observations from the first aspect, namely Maintaining Attitudes, which includes four important indicators.

1.   **Maintaining Attitudes**

The use of internet media can influence students' tolerance attitudes in the context of social interactions in the classroom, especially in terms of maintaining order and respect during group discussions and presentations. The following four indicators show significant changes from meeting I to meeting II, reflecting an increase in students' tolerance attitudes after the use of internet media.

Table 4.10 Sitting Quietly in Discussions.

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	60	10	30
Meeting II	60	30	0	0

This indicator measures students' calmness when participating in discussions. At meeting I, most teachers assessed students as being in the good and very poor categories. However, after the implementation of internet media, 60% of students were considered very good and the rest were good, indicating a significant increase.

Table 4.11 Asking permission when expressing an opinion.

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	40	60
Meeting II	40	60	0	0

Students' attitudes in respecting turns to speak were very low at the first meeting. After learning using internet media, there was a drastic improvement with all students showing an increase to the good and very good categories.

Table 4.12 Standing with an upright posture when presenting discussion results in front of the class

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	60	40
Meeting II	60	40	0	0

Initially, students' self-confidence when expressing opinions was still weak. After the implementation of internet media, 100% of teachers stated an increase in students' upright and confident attitudes during presentations.

Table 4.13 Not bullying other ethnic groups

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	70	30
Meeting II	70	30	0	0

This indicator assesses tolerance in ethnic diversity. If at meeting I most students still showed intolerant attitudes, then after the integration of internet-based educational media, 70% of students showed changes towards very good and 30% good.

2. **Keeping Your Words**

Students' ability to keep their words reflects their level of tolerance in communicating, especially when discussing and working in groups. The following three indicators highlight significant changes in student behavior after learning using video-based internet media. For more details, the following are the results of the study:

Table 4.14 Not interrupting when friends are expressing their opinions

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	80	20
Meeting II	80	20	0	0

At the beginning of the observation, the majority of teachers considered that students still often interrupted during discussions, with 80% in the poor category. After the implementation of internet media, all teachers stated that there was an improvement, with 80% of students considered very good at being polite listeners and not interrupting friends' conversations.

Table 4.15 Speaking with good and correct pronunciation

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	80	20
Meeting II	80	20	0	0

Students' ability to speak politely and according to norms has increased significantly. If previously 80% of teachers assessed students as lacking in using good pronunciation, at meeting II there was a big jump towards very good and good, indicating a positive influence of the learning media used.

Table 4.16 Grouping with anyone without distinguishing between male and female gender.

Meeting	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)
Meeting I	0	0	50	50
Meeting II	50	50	0	0

At meeting I, half of the students still showed discriminatory attitudes in grouping. However, after the approach via internet media, all teachers assessed that there had been positive changes, where 100% of students were declared good to very good at mingling regardless of gender.

Discussion
Implications for Educational Practice and Research

The findings from two instructional cycles reveal that the integration of internet-based video media significantly improved fifth-grade students' empathy and tolerance at SDN Moahino. During the first cycle, students displayed limited respect toward teachers, low discipline during discussions, and minimal initiative in supporting peers. However, by the second cycle, marked behavioral changes were observed. Indicators of empathy such as showing respect to teachers, congratulating and encouraging peers, and helping classmates who faced academic or social difficulties increased substantially. Likewise, tolerance-related behaviors improved, with students exhibiting greater willingness to cooperate regardless of gender or ethnic background, refraining from ethnic-based teasing or exclusion, and showing openness to differing viewpoints. These shifts indicate that the systematic use of internet-based video media contributed not only to the students' cognitive engagement but also to their affective and moral growth (Paling et al., 2024).

These behavioral transformations align with previous research emphasizing the potential of digital media to promote socio-emotional learning. Kamila et al., (2025) demonstrated that the use of digital media enhances adolescents' empathy when learning involves observation, reflection, and interactive experiences. Hariyono et al. (2024) underscored the value of structured digital interventions in developing students' socio-emotional competencies within formal educational settings. The current study extends these findings by showing that when video content is deliberately and systematically integrated into a thematically sensitive subject such as the *Proclamation of Independence* students not only comprehend historical narratives but also develop affective dispositions such as empathy, respect, and tolerance (Touwe et al., 2025).

The improvement in social behaviors observed among students supports Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that learning occurs through observation and imitation of modeled behaviors (Maryati et al., 2025). In this study, videos presenting various perspectives on Indonesia's independence served as visual models of cooperation, fairness, and mutual respect. As students viewed scenes depicting collective struggle, sacrifice, and interethnic unity, they began to internalize these values and demonstrate them in class interactions (Prilianto, 2017). Consistent with Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, the integration of visual and verbal information through video allowed students to process emotional and cognitive cues simultaneously (Idrus, 2023). This

multimodal experience strengthened their understanding of moral lessons embedded in historical events, turning passive observation into active reflection (Huda & Djono, 2019).

A key strength of this study lies in the contextualization of digital media within a culturally and historically relevant theme. Many studies on digital learning emphasize generic content, often detached from students' lived realities. In contrast, the present research embedded media use in the theme of the Proclamation of Independence a subject that naturally evokes national identity and moral reflection. This contextual approach enabled students to connect their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds with broader societal values such as equality, solidarity, and respect for diversity (Mubarak & Rahman, 2025). Consequently, the digital materials functioned not merely as audiovisual aids but as cultural artifacts that mediated moral learning(Wirda, 2025).

The study's results also suggest that empathy and tolerance can be cultivated through pedagogical scaffolding that combines media exposure, guided reflection, and collaborative discussion. During the second cycle, teachers facilitated reflective dialogue sessions after video viewings, allowing students to express emotional responses, discuss moral dilemmas, and relate historical events to their everyday social lives. This reflective process appeared critical to transforming emotional reactions into sustained behavioral change. The shift from passive viewing to dialogic engagement resonates with constructivist and sociocultural learning perspectives, which emphasize meaning-making through social interaction and reflection(Pranyata, 2023).

The findings indicate that affective learning outcomes such as empathy and tolerance do not emerge automatically from digital exposure; rather, they depend on the design and facilitation of the learning process. The deliberate selection of video content featuring diverse, even controversial, perspectives on Indonesia's independence proved instrumental in prompting moral reasoning. Students confronted multiple narratives about independence heroes, regional contributions, and differing conceptions of freedom. This multiplicity encouraged them to think critically and to appreciate the coexistence of different viewpoints (Reba & Mataputun, 2025). Such engagement supports the argument by (Bhoki et al., 2025) that exposure to multiple cultural narratives through media enhances intercultural understanding and democratic dispositions in students.

These findings carry two major implications for both educational practice and research. First, from a pedagogical perspective, they demonstrate that thematic Social Studies curricula can be meaningfully enriched through carefully curated digital content (Saragih, 2025). When used purposefully, internet-based video media can bridge the gap between cognitive understanding and moral application. This integration helps address long-standing limitations in conventional IPS instruction, which tends to emphasize memorization of facts over the cultivation of social and ethical awareness (Susanto, 2019). Teachers can thus utilize YouTube and similar platforms not only to visualize historical events but also to engage students in emotional reflection and moral dialogue, transforming the classroom into a space for both intellectual and character growth (Shafira, 2025).

Second, from a research perspective, the study contributes empirical evidence to the global discourse on how technology supports socio-emotional and intercultural learning (Handayani & Darodjat, 2024). By situating the Indonesian context within these broader academic debates, the study expands the understanding of how culturally grounded, media-based pedagogical interventions can effectively promote character formation (Patriasih et al., 2025). It suggests that integrating video media into value-based learning is not limited to Western or urban contexts but can also thrive in rural and multicultural environments like SDN Moahino. This finding challenges assumptions that digital innovation is context-dependent and shows its adaptability to diverse educational settings when aligned with local culture and curriculum needs (Yusuf, 2023).

The study highlights the interdependence of cognitive, affective, and social dimensions in learning. The development of empathy and tolerance was not isolated from students' understanding of history but was deeply intertwined with it (Abdurahman et al., 2025). When students viewed independence not merely as a political milestone but as a collective human experience, they were more inclined to exhibit prosocial behaviors in class. This suggests that affective learning should not be

treated as an auxiliary objective but as an integral part of holistic education. The study reinforces the idea that internet-based media particularly video platforms such as YouTube should not be confined to cognitive or motivational purposes (Afriani & Djatmiko, 2025). Instead, they should be strategically integrated into thematic lessons to nurture empathy, tolerance, and moral reasoning. When supported by reflective facilitation and culturally resonant content, digital media become powerful instruments for character education(Mugara & Ali, 2025). Thus, rather than viewing technology as a neutral or technical tool, educators and policymakers should recognize it as an essential component of holistic, humanizing, and character-based education (Halim et al., 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

The Based on the findings of the study on the use of the internet in social studies learning, specifically on the theme of the Proclamation, to enhance empathy and tolerance among fifth-grade students at SDN Moahino, it can be concluded that internet-based media has a positive impact on students' social development. During the first session, the use of the internet did not yet produce a significant change. However, by the second session, a noticeable improvement was observed, where students demonstrated empathy by helping one another, respecting differing opinions, and showing tolerance during discussions and group work. This indicates that when properly and purposefully integrated, the internet can serve as an effective medium for character-based learning.

In line with these findings, it is recommended that teachers at SDN Moahino continue to develop their understanding and skills in utilizing the internet as an instructional tool, particularly for instilling social values in students. Furthermore, consistent support in ensuring access to internet facilities is crucial for maintaining optimal and sustainable digital learning practices. Future research may explore more deeply the types of digital content that are most effective, as well as the long-term impact of internet media use on students' character development.

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