

Varied Instructional Media and Learning Motivation in Junior Secondary Social Studies: A Literature Synthesis and Resource-Constrained Implementation Strategy

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Abstract. Junior secondary Social Studies instruction faces challenges in sustaining students' attention, engagement, and learning motivation. This article synthesizes empirical findings on instructional media and proposes a practical implementation framework for resource-constrained schools. A narrative literature review was conducted on empirical studies published between 2014 and 2025, complemented by international literature on student engagement, active learning, multimedia learning, and technology integration. The findings indicate that videos, interactive media, multimedia, and locally contextualized media can support motivation and engagement when integrated with active learning, feedback, discussion, and tasks connected to students' experiences. Thus, instructional variety should focus on enriching learning experiences rather than increasing the number of media used. Based on the synthesis, the Media–Motivation–Meaning–Monitoring–Modification (5M) framework is proposed to guide teachers in planning, implementing, monitoring, and refining varied Social Studies instruction using available school resources.

Keywords: instructional media; learning motivation; student engagement; Social Studies instruction; junior secondary school; resource constraints; literature review

1 Introduction

Social Studies (IPS) at the junior secondary level integrates various dimensions of social, geographical, historical, economic, and civic life. Consequently, Social Studies instruction aims not only to develop students' knowledge but also to foster their ability to understand social phenomena, think critically, and connect concepts with real-world social contexts [1].

These characteristics require learning experiences that enable students to connect concepts with situations familiar to them. Instruction that relies too heavily on teacher explanations and rote repetition of information can limit opportunities for students to interact actively with the subject matter. Various studies in Indonesia indicate that Social Studies instruction continues to face challenges in selecting and implementing teaching methods and instructional media that are appropriate for students' characteristics [2, 3, 4].

This issue is important because learning motivation and student engagement are not determined solely by students' internal characteristics. Both can also be influenced by the learning environment. Student engagement can be understood as a multidimensional construct comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions [5]. It is dynamic and can be influenced by features of the learning environment. Therefore, the way teachers design learning experiences is an important factor in supporting student engagement.

As education continues to evolve, digital media and instructional technologies are increasingly used to enrich learning experiences. A meta-analysis by Tamim [6] found an overall positive effect of technology on learning outcomes. However, this finding does not mean that the use of particular technologies automatically leads to better learning. Research on mobile devices similarly shows that the educational benefits of technology depend on how the devices are integrated into learning activities [7].

This perspective is particularly relevant to Social Studies education. Instructional media should not be treated as ends in themselves but as tools for supporting more active and meaningful learning experiences. Specific media do not inherently produce greater learning benefits [8]. Differences in learning outcomes are better understood in relation to the methods, activities, and learning conditions accompanying the use of media. The more relevant question, therefore, is not which medium is best, but what kinds of learning activities a particular medium can support.

This principle is consistent with multimedia learning theory. Multimedia learning involves the active selection of relevant information, its organization into coherent structures, and its integration with prior knowledge [9]. Thus, the mere use of images, text, audio, or video does not automatically produce meaningful learning. Students still need to engage actively in processing and interpreting the information presented.

Empirical research in Indonesian Social Studies education reveals a broadly consistent pattern. The use of video combined with brainstorming has been reported to influence students' learning motivation [10]. Differences in learning motivation have also been found between students who used Kahoot and those in a comparison group [11]. Locally themed documentary videos have likewise been reported to influence Social Studies learning motivation [12]. Similar findings have been reported for audiovisual media [13]. Kahoot has also been shown to support motivation through interactive features and feedback [14], while its use in a context incorporating local wisdom has produced positive results [15].

However, these studies generally focus on a single medium, intervention, or school setting. The available evidence therefore remains fragmented. A synthesis is needed to address more practical questions concerning which patterns of media use are consistently associated with student motivation and engagement in Social Studies learning and how such patterns can be implemented by teachers working in resource-constrained environments.

This issue is particularly relevant because schools do not have equal access to digital devices, internet connectivity, software, or technology-related training. Systematic reviews of ICT integration in secondary education also indicate that technology use is associated with pedagogical and technological competence, professional development, and the sustainability of available resources [16]. Consequently, instructional recommendations that depend heavily on advanced technologies may not be appropriate for all school settings.

This article addresses this gap by synthesizing literature that connects three aspects: instructional media, students' learning experiences, and learning motivation or engagement. The study aims to map empirical findings on the use of instructional media in junior secondary Social Studies, identify characteristics of media use associated with student motivation and engagement, explain why varied learning experiences are more important than technological

variety alone, and formulate an implementation framework suitable for resource-constrained settings.

2 Methods

This article employs a narrative literature review approach to identify and synthesize research findings on the use of instructional media in junior secondary Social Studies, with particular attention to their relationship with students' motivation, engagement, attention, and learning responses. This approach was selected because the reviewed literature varies considerably in research design, media type, learning activities, and instructional context. The synthesis therefore focuses on identifying recurring patterns and conceptual relationships rather than calculating statistical effect sizes. The review followed a structured process of searching, selecting, categorizing, and interpreting relevant sources [17].

A search for empirical literature was conducted through Google Scholar and Garuda using combinations of keywords related to instructional media, Social Studies instruction, the junior secondary level, and learning motivation. The search terms included Social Studies instructional media, junior high Social Studies learning motivation, junior high Social Studies audiovisual media, junior high Social Studies instructional videos, Kahoot in Social Studies instruction, and junior high Social Studies multimedia. The search focused on studies that examined the use of media within the instructional process rather than merely reporting the development of media products. International literature was used as a conceptual foundation for interpreting the empirical findings, particularly in relation to student engagement, active learning, multimedia learning, and technology integration in education.

Empirical studies were selected according to several criteria. Sources were included if they were published between 2014 and 2025, addressed Social Studies instruction or closely related learning contexts, involved junior secondary students or their equivalents, and examined the use of instructional media, educational technology, or multimedia. The studies also needed to report at least one outcome related to student motivation, engagement, attention, or learning response. Studies that focused solely on media development without examining their use in instruction were not treated as primary empirical evidence. Likewise, studies without a direct connection to Social Studies at the junior secondary level were excluded from the main synthesis.

Data from each study that met the criteria were extracted according to four aspects: the type of media, the characteristics of the learning activities, indicators of motivation or engagement, and the implementation context. These aspects were then compared across studies to identify recurring patterns. The analysis did not seek to determine a single universally superior type of media. Instead, it focused on the pedagogical mechanisms accompanying media use, including feedback, interaction, discussion, visualization, contextualization, and students' active involvement in information processing.

The findings were subsequently synthesized thematically by considering the relationships among media characteristics, learning activities, and student learning responses. International literature was used to strengthen the interpretation of patterns identified in the Indonesian studies. Thus, Indonesian empirical research served as the primary basis for the synthesis, while international literature provided a broader conceptual framework for interpreting the findings.

Through this process, the study generated a synthesis of how instructional media may support motivation and engagement in junior secondary Social Studies and of the pedagogical conditions that may facilitate these outcomes. Because this study is a narrative literature review,

the synthesized findings are not intended to establish causal relationships or to demonstrate that one type of media is consistently more effective than another. The conclusions are limited to patterns identified in studies that met the inclusion criteria.

3 Result and Discussion

2.1 Patterns of Empirical Findings on Media and Learning Engagement

Based on the selection criteria, six core empirical studies were included in the primary synthesis presented in Table 1. These studies examined the use of videos, audiovisual media, Kahoot, vlog-style documentary videos, and media incorporating local contexts. Despite differences in intervention characteristics and instructional settings, they provide insights into the relationship between media use and students' motivation, attention, or engagement in junior secondary Social Studies learning.

Table 1. Summary of key empirical studies.

Author(s)	Media/Intervention	Design/Context	Main Findings
Setyorini (2017)	Video combined with brainstorming	SMP Negeri 1 Babadan, Ponorogo	The use of video combined with brainstorming had a significant effect on students' learning motivation.
Rasyid & Islamia (2021)	Audiovisual media in the form of video	Junior secondary school/MTs in Tajinan District	Audiovisual media was associated with students' motivation to learn Social Studies.
Aulia et al. (2022)	Kahoot	SMPN 12 Bandung	Students who used Kahoot showed higher learning motivation than those in the comparison group.
Haviandra & Khotimah (2022)	Vlog-style documentary video with local content	SMPN 5 Sidoarjo	The use of locally themed documentary videos had a significant effect on learning motivation.
Aziza et al. (2025)	Kahoot	SMPN 13 Malang	Interactive features and immediate feedback supported student attention and engagement.
Widiyanto et al. (2025)	Kahoot incorporating local wisdom	SMPN 2 Buduran	The use of Kahoot with local wisdom content was associated with more positive motivational outcomes than the comparison instruction.

Table 1 illustrates the variety of media used in Social Studies instruction. However, the more important pattern lies not in the differences among media types but in how the media were integrated into learning activities. Across the studies, media were generally used in combination with specific activities, such as brainstorming, answering questions, receiving feedback, or

interacting with instructional content. Media use therefore cannot be treated as an isolated factor explaining differences in motivation or engagement. Its pedagogical value appears to depend on the learning experiences structured around it.

The findings also provide insufficient grounds for designating any single type of media as universally superior. Video may support motivation when combined with activities that require students to process information, while Kahoot may support attention and engagement by enabling students to respond to questions and receive immediate feedback. These patterns shift the focus from asking which medium is most effective to a more pedagogically relevant question: what kind of learning experience does a particular medium make possible?

3.2 Media as a Catalyst for Learning Activities

Findings related to Kahoot highlight the importance of interaction in the use of instructional media. Differences in learning motivation have been reported between students who used Kahoot and those in a comparison group [11]. Similarly, activities involving question answering and immediate feedback have been shown to support student attention and engagement [14]. These findings can be understood in relation to the concept of student engagement, which encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions [5]. Interactive media may support engagement when students are not simply receiving information but are required to respond to it actively.

In this context, the potential value of Kahoot does not lie solely in the application itself. Its pedagogical value arises from the activity structure it provides, allowing students to answer questions, receive immediate feedback, and view their results. This principle is consistent with research on active learning, which identifies learner activity as an important component of the learning process [18]. Consequently, when access to digital applications is limited, similar pedagogical functions can be supported through question cards, whiteboards, group quizzes, or other interactive activities. What needs to be preserved is not the specific application but the opportunities for interaction and feedback.

A similar pattern can be observed in the use of video. The combination of video and brainstorming has been reported to influence students' learning motivation [10]. Audiovisual media have also been associated with motivation in Social Studies learning [13], while locally themed documentary videos have been reported to influence learning motivation [12]. Video has particular potential in Social Studies because it can present events, locations, people, and social phenomena that may be difficult for students to observe directly. Nevertheless, this potential does not automatically translate into active learning.

Multimedia learning involves the active selection, organization, and integration of information [9]. Accordingly, videos should not be used merely as a means of delivering information. After viewing a video, students need opportunities to engage in activities that support information processing, such as identifying changes, comparing conditions, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, or relating observed phenomena to their immediate environment. In this way, video functions not only as a source of information but also as a stimulus for learning activities.

This perspective helps contextualize findings on interactive multimedia, which reported an interaction between learning medium and motivation in relation to students' conceptual understanding [19]. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously because they do not directly demonstrate that multimedia itself causes an increase in motivation. Apparent benefits attributed to a medium may instead reflect the teaching method, activity design, or other

conditions accompanying its use [8]. The findings therefore do not support the assumption that digital media are inherently superior to non-digital media.

These findings point to an important distinction between variation in media and variation in learning experiences. Media variation may involve the use of presentations, videos, and digital quizzes across different lessons. However, when all of these media are used primarily to deliver information in a one-way manner, the students' learning experience may remain largely unchanged. By contrast, variation in learning experiences occurs when students are given opportunities to observe, interpret, ask questions, discuss ideas, formulate responses, make connections, and reflect on their learning. From this perspective, the variation most relevant to student engagement lies not primarily in the number of media used but in the diversity of cognitive and social activities that those media facilitate.

Contextualization provides another mechanism for enriching learning experiences. Examples of media use that connect instructional content with local contexts have been reported in studies using locally themed video and Kahoot activities incorporating local wisdom [12, 15]. This approach is particularly relevant to Social Studies because the subject is closely related to social life, the environment, the economy, culture, and social change. Resources such as photographs of local surroundings, regional maps, local news, documentation of community activities, and short videos can be used as learning materials without requiring sophisticated technology. When such resources are used to stimulate observation, questioning, discussion, and interpretation, students have opportunities to connect Social Studies concepts with social realities that are familiar to them.

3.3 Instructional Design Principles and the 5M Framework

The synthesis suggests that media selection should begin with the intended learning objectives and the learning experience to be created rather than with the applications available. Three questions can guide this decision-making process: what learning objectives should be achieved, what activities should learners undertake to achieve them, and what is the simplest medium that can effectively support those activities? This sequence positions media as a pedagogical tool rather than as an instructional goal in itself.

Based on this approach, the use of media in Social Studies instruction can be guided by four principles. First, each medium should serve a clear function that is aligned with the learning objectives. Videos are appropriate when visualizing a phenomenon adds instructional value, quizzes can be used when practice and feedback are needed, and images or maps are useful when learners are expected to observe and interpret information. Second, media use should be accompanied by active engagement through activities such as discussion, analysis, problem-solving, or reflection. Third, media do not always need to be digital. The same interactive and feedback-oriented principles can be implemented through simple materials when devices or internet connectivity are limited. Fourth, the surrounding social and geographical environment can be utilized as a learning resource so that instruction does not depend entirely on sophisticated digital materials.

These principles indicate that instructional variety does not necessarily mean using numerous applications or making substantial investments in technology. Innovation can begin with small changes to the learning experience. A single short video can become meaningful when followed by questions and discussion. A simple quiz can function as an effective feedback tool when its questions are aligned with the learning objectives. Even a single image from the local environment can become a valuable learning resource when it is used to encourage interpretation, comparison, or argumentation.

Based on this synthesis, the article proposes the 5M conceptual framework: Media, Motivation, Meaning, Monitoring, and Modification. The framework is not an empirically validated model. Rather, it is a conceptual synthesis intended to help teachers connect media selection with the broader learning process.

The Media stage involves selecting learning resources according to the learning objectives, the characteristics of the content, and the resources available. The Motivation stage uses media as an entry point for gaining students' attention through engaging questions, current events, images, short videos, or introductory quizzes. The Meaning stage guides learners in connecting information with relevant concepts, prior experiences, their surrounding environment, or social issues. The Monitoring stage focuses on observing students' responses, discussions, work products, questions, and reflections. The findings from this process inform the Modification stage, in which teachers adjust explanations, activities, or forms of support for subsequent learning.

Thus, the 5M sequence can be represented as:

Media → Motivation → Meaning → Monitoring → Modification

Within this framework, motivation is not treated as an automatic outcome of media use. Instead, it is understood as part of a broader learning experience shaped by the quality of students' interactions with instructional materials, learning activities, teachers, and the learning environment.

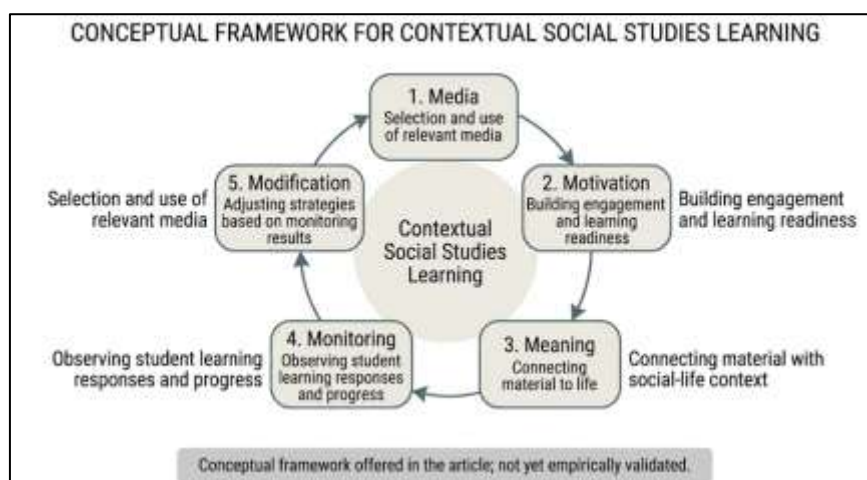


Fig. 1. 5M implementation framework in Social Studies instruction.

To illustrate the framework, consider a lesson on social change in the local environment. A teacher might begin by showing a short video depicting how a particular area has changed over time. The teacher could then pose questions about the changes observed and their possible causes. Students would discuss these observations and relate them to the concept of social change. A brief quiz could then be used to check understanding and provide feedback. When digital devices are available, platforms such as Kahoot or similar tools could be used; when they are not, question cards or written quizzes can serve the same function. Finally, students could

be asked to identify examples of social change in their own communities and explain how these examples relate to the concepts they have learned.

This scenario illustrates that effective instructional variety does not require an abundance of media. What matters more is the sequence of learning experiences, moving from observation and questioning to discussion, response, connection, and reflection. Within this framework, media function as tools for creating learning experiences that are more active and meaningful.

3.4 Implications and Limitations of the Study

For teachers, the synthesis suggests that instructional innovation does not need to begin with mastering new applications. Teachers can start by making small changes to learning activities and using media that are already available. Media selection can be guided by learning objectives, the characteristics of the content, students' needs, and the resources available in the school.

For schools, supporting instructional innovation does not necessarily require investment in multiple digital platforms. Providing basic equipment, reliable network access, learning resources, and opportunities for teachers to share practices may offer more sustainable forms of support. Collaboration can also allow teachers to exchange question banks, short videos, local images, worksheets, and lesson scenarios, reducing the extent to which media development becomes an individual responsibility. In this context, the principles of "reuse, adapt, and share" provide a practical way to develop instructional resources incrementally.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted in light of the limitations of the study. As a narrative literature review, the study does not produce a pooled effect size as a meta-analysis would. Most of the empirical evidence synthesized here comes from studies conducted in Indonesia, so transferring the findings to other educational contexts requires caution. The reviewed studies also differ in research design, instruments, and indicators of motivation or engagement, which limits the feasibility of direct comparisons across studies. International literature in this review primarily serves as a conceptual basis for interpreting the Indonesian findings rather than as the core empirical corpus concerning junior secondary Social Studies.

A further limitation concerns the proposed 5M framework. The framework was developed through conceptual synthesis and has not yet been tested through field research. It therefore cannot yet be presented as a validated or demonstrably effective instructional model. Future research could examine the framework in diverse school and classroom settings, broaden the literature search to international databases, and employ systematic review or meta-analytic methods to obtain stronger evidence concerning the relationships among media characteristics, learning activities, and student motivation or engagement.

3 Conclusion

This study indicates that varied instructional media can support student motivation and engagement in junior secondary Social Studies. The empirical literature synthesized in this article includes the use of videos, interactive media, multimedia, and media incorporating local contexts.

At the same time, the literature does not suggest that media produce educational benefits automatically. Their potential value depends largely on how they are integrated into learning experiences that are active, interactive, contextual, and supported by feedback. This pattern is

consistent with broader research emphasizing student engagement, active learning, and instructional design as important factors in the effective use of technology and multimedia. Accordingly, instructional variety should not be understood as an obligation to use as many applications as possible. The more important goal is to provide varied and meaningful learning experiences. Digital media can be used when they serve a clear pedagogical purpose, while simple and locally available materials can support the same learning objectives when technological resources are limited.

This article proposes the 5M conceptual framework, consisting of Media, Motivation, Meaning, Monitoring, and Modification, as a practical way to connect media selection with learning activities and ongoing instructional improvement. The framework positions media as a means rather than an end, but it requires empirical testing before it can be considered a validated instructional model.

Thus, innovation in Social Studies instruction need not begin with sophisticated technology. It can begin with more fundamental questions about the learning experience to be created and the simplest available medium that can effectively support it.

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