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Improving Student Participation through the “Sahabat Bhinneka” Board Game in Cultural Identity at SDN 1 Bantengan

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Abstract:

Student participation is an important aspect of an active learning process, particularly in cultural identity learning, which requires students to interact, collaborate, and express their ideas. This study aimed to improve student participation in cultural identity learning through the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game at SDN 1 Bantengan. This classroom action research involved eight Grade 4 students and employed the Kemmis and McTaggart model through a pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. Data were collected through systematic observation using an observation sheet consisting of eight indicators of student participation, with each indicator scored on a scale of 1–4. The results showed a progressive increase in student participation. The average participation percentage increased from 49.22% in the pre-cycle, categorized as fairly active, to 71.48% in Cycle I, categorized as active, and 91.41% in Cycle II, categorized as very active. The proportion of students achieving the active or very active category also increased from 0% (0 of 8 students) in the pre-cycle to 62.5% (5 of 8 students) in Cycle I and 100% (8 of 8 students) in Cycle II. The findings indicate that the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game supported increased student participation by providing opportunities for active involvement in learning activities, group discussions, challenges, cooperation, and reflection. The study concludes that the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game can be used as an interactive, culturally contextualized learning strategy to improve student participation in cultural identity learning.

Keywords: Student Participation, Cultural Identity, Board Game, Sahabat Bhinneka, Classroom Action Research

Introduction

Student participation is an important aspect of classroom learning because students' active involvement shapes how they engage with learning activities. Participation can be observed through behaviors such as paying attention to explanations and instructions, expressing opinions or answers, participating in group discussions, cooperating with peers, responding to questions or challenges, and taking part in reflection activities. These behaviors are related to the behavioral dimension of student engagement. Fredricks et al. (2004) explain that school engagement is a multidimensional construct consisting of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. They also emphasize that engagement is responsive to contextual features of the learning environment. Therefore, learning environments that provide meaningful opportunities for students to interact, communicate, collaborate, and participate actively are important for supporting students' involvement in classroom learning.

Student participation is particularly important in cultural identity learning at the elementary school level. Cultural identity learning involves more than students' ability to recognize or receive information about cultural differences. Students also need opportunities to communicate ideas, interact with peers, cooperate in learning activities, respond to situations related to cultural diversity, and reflect on what they have learned. Such learning therefore requires activities that allow students to become directly involved in the learning process. When learning activities provide limited opportunities for interaction, students may have fewer opportunities to demonstrate active participation. This situation highlights the importance of instructional strategies that can encourage students to participate actively while remaining aligned with the objectives of cultural identity learning.

One approach that can provide opportunities for active involvement is game-based learning. Game-based learning uses games to facilitate learning experiences and can incorporate elements such as interaction, goals, challenges, decision-making, rules, and feedback. Board games represent one form of non-digital game that can be integrated into classroom instruction because students interact not only with learning content but also with game components and other players.

The potential of board games as educational interventions has been examined in previous research. Noda et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review to examine the effectiveness of interventions involving board games. Their search of the PsycINFO and PubMed databases identified 71 studies, of which 27 met the inclusion criteria and were subsequently reviewed. The reviewed studies addressed board games in various intervention contexts and examined outcomes including educational knowledge, cognitive functions, and other conditions. The findings suggest that board games have been used beyond recreational purposes and may provide educational and psychosocial benefits, although their effects vary according to the characteristics and purposes of the interventions.

Further evidence concerning analog game-based learning is provided by Sousa et al. (2023). Their systematic literature review mapped empirical research on board, tabletop, and other analog games in learning processes. Using the PRISMA methodology, the researchers identified an initial sample of 2,741 articles and obtained a final sample of 45 studies after applying the defined selection criteria. The review found evidence supporting the educational potential of analog games across a broad range of knowledge, cognitive, and psychological outcomes. The reviewed literature also indicated potential contributions to soft skills and aspects associated with meaningful learning, including engagement, satisfaction, flexibility, and opportunities for experimentation. However, the

review also identified limitations in a considerable number of the pedagogical approaches examined, including the relatively low prevalence of modern board games that clearly connect intended learning outcomes with elements of game design. These findings suggest that the educational value of a board game depends not only on the use of game elements but also on how the game is designed and connected to specific learning objectives.

The alignment between game design and instructional objectives is therefore important when board games are used as learning media. Nautiyal et al. (2024) proposed a practical framework for designing and implementing educational board games in K–12 classrooms. Their framework emphasizes the integration of educational board games into classroom instruction and considers how game design and implementation can be connected to educational purposes. This perspective supports the use of board games as structured learning activities rather than merely as entertainment. In elementary learning, this means that the rules, challenges, interactions, and activities within a board game should provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage with the intended learning content.

Although previous studies have reported the educational potential of board games and analog games, they have examined different educational contexts, learning objectives, and outcomes. Noda et al. (2019) reviewed board-game interventions across different purposes, while Sousa et al. (2023) examined analog game-based learning across a broad range of educational outcomes. These studies provide a foundation for considering board games as an instructional approach. However, they do not specifically address the use of a culturally contextualized board game as a strategy for encouraging student participation in elementary cultural identity learning. This gap provides an opportunity to examine a board game that connects cultural identity learning content with students' active participation through interaction, discussion, cooperation, responses to questions and challenges, and reflection.

The present study addresses this context through the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game in cultural identity learning for Grade 4 students at SDN 1 Bantengan. The board game is positioned as part of the learning process and is designed to provide opportunities for students to participate through classroom interaction, group discussion, responses to questions and challenges, cooperation with peers, involvement in board-game activities, and reflection. Thus, the board game is not used merely as supplementary entertainment but as an instructional activity intended to create opportunities for observable student participation.

Based on this background, this classroom action research aims to improve student participation in cultural identity learning through the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game at SDN 1 Bantengan. The study examines changes in observable student participation across eight indicators during the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. By focusing on student participation as an observable aspect of classroom learning, this study provides classroom-based evidence regarding the use of a culturally contextualized board game as an instructional strategy for encouraging active participation among elementary school students in cultural identity learning.

Methods

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design using the Kemmis and McTaggart model. The model follows a cyclical process consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection, in which the results of reflection inform improvements in the subsequent cycle (Prihantoro & Hidayat, 2019). The research was conducted with eight

Grade 4 students at SDN 1 Bantengan. It consisted of a pre-cycle stage followed by two action cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II. The pre-cycle was conducted to identify the students' initial level of participation before the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game. Cycle I involved the implementation of the board game, followed by observation and reflection to identify aspects requiring improvement. The results of the reflection were used to plan improvements for Cycle II, particularly by providing more equitable opportunities for participation, strengthening group discussion and interaction, and incorporating reflection after the board-game activity.

The participants were eight Grade 4 students who took part in the learning activities. Quantitative data were collected through systematic observation of student participation during the learning process. An observation sheet consisting of eight indicators was used: (1) active participation in learning, (2) attention to teacher explanations and instructions, (3) willingness to express opinions or answers, (4) involvement in group discussions, (5) involvement in learning activities, (6) cooperation with group members, (7) responses to questions or challenges, and (8) involvement in learning reflection. Each indicator was scored on a scale of 1–4, with a maximum score of 32 for each student.

The observation data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the total score and percentage score for each student, followed by the class average score and average percentage at each stage. The percentage was calculated by dividing the obtained score by the maximum score of 32 and multiplying by 100. The percentage of student participation was categorized based on activity criteria adapted from Leksono et al. (2018), namely Very Active (81–100%), Active (61–80%), Fairly Active (41–60%), and Less Active (<41%). The original criteria distinguish between 21–40% as Less Active and 0–20% as Not Active; these two lower categories were combined into one Less Active category for the purposes of this study. The adapted categories were applied consistently throughout the study. Improvement was determined by comparing the average participation percentage and the proportion of students achieving the Active or Very Active category across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The research success criterion was set at a minimum of 75% of students achieving the Active or Very Active category.

Results and Discussion

Findings

The classroom action research was conducted through a pre-cycle stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II to examine changes in student participation in cultural identity learning following the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game. Student participation was observed using eight indicators: active participation in learning, attention to teacher explanations and instructions, willingness to express opinions or answers, involvement in group discussions, involvement in learning activities, cooperation with group members, responses to questions or challenges, and involvement in learning reflection. Each indicator was scored on a scale of 1–4, resulting in a maximum score of 32 for each student. The participation categories were defined as Very Active (81–100%), Active (61–80%), Fairly Active (41–60%), and Less Active (<41%).

The pre-cycle observation was conducted to identify the initial level of student participation before the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game. The observation showed that student participation was generally still limited. The total score obtained by the eight students was 126, with an average score of 15.75 out of a maximum of 32. This corresponded to an average participation percentage of 49.22%, which was categorized as Fairly Active. None of the eight students achieved the Active or Very Active

category. Four students were categorized as Fairly Active, while the remaining students showed lower levels of participation. This initial condition indicated that opportunities for students to express ideas, participate in discussions, respond to questions, and become actively involved in classroom activities still needed to be strengthened. The results of the observations across the three stages are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Improvement in Student Participation Across the Classroom Action Research Stages

Stage	Total Score	Mean Score	Average Participation	Category	Students in Active/Very Active Category
Pre-cycle	126	15.75	49.22%	Fairly Active	0 of 8 (0%)
Cycle I	183	22.88	71.48%	Active	5 of 8 (62.5%)
Cycle II	234	29.25	91.41%	Very Active	8 of 8 (100%)

Source: Research data, 2026.

Table 1 shows a progressive increase in student participation throughout the classroom action research. From the pre-cycle to Cycle I, the average participation percentage increased from 49.22% to 71.48%, representing an increase of 22.26 percentage points. The average score also increased from 15.75 to 22.88. In addition, the number of students reaching the Active or Very Active category increased from none in the pre-cycle to five students, or 62.5%, in Cycle I. Although this result demonstrated substantial improvement, it had not yet reached the predetermined success criterion of at least 75% of students achieving the Active or Very Active category.

Cycle I represented the first implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game as part of cultural identity learning. During this cycle, students were provided with opportunities to interact with learning materials through the game, participate in group activities, respond to questions and challenges, and communicate with their peers. The implementation created a learning situation that differed from the initial condition observed in the pre-cycle. Students were not only positioned as recipients of information but were encouraged to become involved in activities that required interaction and responses during the learning process.

The observation results indicated that most students demonstrated greater involvement during Cycle I. Several students who had previously shown limited participation began to respond to questions, communicate with group members, and participate in the learning activities. The increase was particularly visible in the overall participation scores, as five of the eight students reached the Active category. Nevertheless, three students remained below the Active category. Their participation was still inconsistent, particularly in expressing opinions, participating in group discussions, and responding independently to questions or challenges. These observations indicated that the first implementation of the board game had created opportunities for participation but that the opportunities were not yet distributed equally among all students.

Reflection after Cycle I was therefore used to identify aspects of the learning process that required improvement. The reflection focused on creating more equitable opportunities for participation, strengthening group discussion and interaction, and incorporating reflection after the board-game activity. These improvements were

intended to ensure that students who were initially less active were not only physically involved in the game but also had opportunities to communicate, respond, cooperate, and reflect. The reflection stage was important because classroom action research is conducted through an iterative process in which the results of one cycle inform the planning of the following cycle (Prihantoro & Hidayat, 2019).

Cycle II incorporated the improvements identified during the reflection of Cycle I. The learning activities continued to use the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game while providing more structured opportunities for participation. Students were encouraged to contribute more evenly during group interaction, respond to questions and challenges, cooperate with peers, and participate in reflection. The changes were intended to address the participation gaps identified in Cycle I rather than simply repeating the same learning procedure.

The results of Cycle II demonstrated a further increase in student participation. The total score increased to 234, with an average score of 29.25 out of 32. The average participation percentage reached 91.41%, which was categorized as Very Active. All eight students achieved either the Active or Very Active category. Six students reached the Very Active category, while two students reached the Active category. Thus, the proportion of students achieving the target category increased from 62.5% in Cycle I to 100% in Cycle II. The result exceeded the predetermined success criterion of 75% and indicated that the classroom action research had achieved its established criterion for student participation. The implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game during the learning process is illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” Board Game in Cultural Identity Learning

The overall pattern demonstrates that student participation increased progressively across the research stages. The average participation percentage rose from 49.22% in the pre-cycle to 71.48% in Cycle I and 91.41% in Cycle II. The increase was also reflected in the number of students achieving the Active or Very Active category, which increased from 0% in the pre-cycle to 62.5% in Cycle I and finally to 100% in Cycle II. Within the context of this classroom action research, the implementation of the board game accompanied a substantial improvement in observable student participation. The results also suggest that the improvement was supported by the refinement of the learning process from Cycle I to Cycle II.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the use of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game provided a learning environment in which students had more opportunities to participate actively in cultural identity learning. The increase in participation was reflected not only in the class average but also in the increasing number of students who reached the Active or Very Active category. This finding is relevant to the nature of cultural identity learning, which requires students to engage with ideas, communicate with others, cooperate in activities, and respond to situations involving cultural diversity. Rather than limiting learning to the acquisition of factual information, the learning process can provide opportunities for students to demonstrate participation through interaction and collaborative activities.

The improvement from the pre-cycle to Cycle I can be understood in relation to the characteristics of board games as interactive learning activities. In the pre-cycle, students had fewer structured opportunities to interact with learning content and peers through an activity that required continuous responses. The introduction of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game changed the learning situation by introducing rules, challenges, turns, group interaction, and opportunities to respond. These characteristics provided students with concrete reasons to communicate and become involved in the activity. In this classroom context, the change in the learning environment was accompanied by an increase in observable participation from 49.22% to 71.48%.

This finding is consistent with the broader literature on educational board games. Noda et al. (2019), through a systematic review of board-game interventions, found that board games have been used in various intervention contexts and have been associated with educational, cognitive, and psychosocial outcomes. Their review demonstrates that board games can function as more than recreational activities when they are incorporated into structured interventions with particular educational purposes. The present study extends this perspective to student participation in elementary cultural identity learning by focusing specifically on observable classroom behaviors such as discussion, cooperation, responding to challenges, and reflection.

The findings are also consistent with Sousa et al. (2023), who reviewed research on board games, tabletop games, and other analog game-based learning approaches. Their review identified educational potential across different learning outcomes and highlighted opportunities for interaction, experimentation, engagement, and other dimensions of learning. At the same time, Sousa et al. (2023) emphasized that the educational value of analog games depends on how the games are connected to pedagogical objectives. This consideration is relevant to the present study because the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game was implemented as part of cultural identity learning rather than as an activity separate from the instructional objectives. The game provided a context in which students could engage with learning content while simultaneously interacting with peers and responding to challenges.

The role of game design and implementation is particularly important when interpreting the findings. Nautiyal et al. (2024) proposed a practical framework for designing and implementing educational board games in K–12 classrooms and emphasized the importance of connecting board-game design with educational purposes and classroom implementation. From this perspective, a board game becomes an instructional medium when its rules, activities, interactions, and challenges are intentionally connected to the intended learning outcomes. The present findings support this principle at the classroom level. The “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game was integrated into the learning process so that students had opportunities to participate through

discussion, interaction, cooperation, responses to questions and challenges, and reflection.

The improvement observed in Cycle II further emphasizes the importance of implementation rather than merely introducing a game. Cycle I already produced an increase in student participation, but the result of 62.5% of students achieving the Active or Very Active category remained below the 75% success criterion. Reflection after Cycle I identified the need to provide more equitable participation opportunities, strengthen group interaction, and include reflection after the activity. These improvements were then incorporated into Cycle II. The subsequent increase to 91.41%, with all eight students reaching at least the Active category, suggests that the refinement of classroom implementation was important in supporting more consistent participation.

The findings are also compatible with the comparative evidence reported by Talan et al. (2020). Their meta-analysis and meta-thematic analysis examined digital and non-digital educational games and found that educational games can contribute to learning outcomes across different contexts. Their work is particularly relevant because the present intervention used a non-digital board game. The findings of this study indicate that a non-digital game can be incorporated into classroom learning without requiring students to rely on digital devices. Instead, interaction occurs directly among students through the physical components, rules, challenges, and social structure of the game.

The social dimension of the board game is particularly relevant to student participation. In a conventional teacher-centered activity, opportunities to speak or respond may be concentrated among a limited number of students. A structured group game can distribute interaction more widely because students are required to take turns, discuss possible responses, listen to peers, and respond to challenges. In the present study, this social interaction was reflected in the indicators concerning group discussion, cooperation with group members, responses to questions or challenges, and willingness to express opinions or answers. The improvement across these aspects contributed to the overall increase in the participation score.

The use of a board game also provided opportunities for students to experience learning as an active process. Student participation was not interpreted solely as answering questions posed by the teacher. Instead, participation included attention to explanations and instructions, involvement in learning activities, cooperation, discussion, responses to challenges, and reflection. This broader observation framework was important because active participation can appear in different forms during classroom interaction. A student who does not frequently speak in front of the entire class may nevertheless demonstrate participation by contributing to group discussion, cooperating with peers, responding during a game, or engaging in reflection.

The results therefore suggest that the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game can function as a contextual instructional activity for cultural identity learning at the elementary school level. The name and content of the game are positioned within the theme of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika and cultural identity, while the learning process uses game-based interaction to encourage participation. This combination is important because cultural identity learning requires students to engage with concepts of diversity not only cognitively but also through social interaction. Group-based activities can provide students with direct experiences of communicating with classmates, listening to different responses, cooperating toward a shared activity, and respecting different perspectives.

The progressive improvement also demonstrates the relevance of the action research cycle itself. Classroom action research does not merely measure whether an intervention produces an outcome; it involves identifying classroom conditions,

implementing an action, observing the process, reflecting on the findings, and refining the subsequent action. Prihantoro and Hidayat (2019) explain that classroom action research follows a cyclical process involving planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the present study, the increase from Cycle I to Cycle II should therefore be interpreted in connection with the reflection and refinement process. The second cycle was not simply a repetition of the first cycle but an improved implementation based on the participation patterns observed previously.

The findings also have practical implications for elementary teachers. A board game does not automatically guarantee active participation simply because it is enjoyable or different from conventional learning activities. Its effectiveness as a classroom activity depends on the extent to which students are given meaningful opportunities to interact with the learning content and with one another. Teachers who use board games for cultural identity learning should therefore consider group organization, turn-taking, question distribution, opportunities for discussion, response mechanisms, and reflection. These elements can help prevent participation from being dominated by a small number of students and can create more equitable opportunities for involvement.

The improvement in student participation should nevertheless be interpreted within the boundaries of the research design. The study involved only eight Grade 4 students at one elementary school and used a classroom action research design without a control group. Consequently, the findings provide classroom-based evidence of improvement within the specific learning context but do not establish that the board game would produce the same magnitude of improvement in other schools, grade levels, or student populations. In addition, the data were obtained through systematic observation, meaning that the results represent observable participation during the learning activities rather than all dimensions of student engagement. Future studies could involve larger groups, multiple schools, additional data sources such as interviews or student questionnaires, or comparative designs to examine the implementation of culturally contextualized board games across different contexts.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a consistent improvement in student participation across the three stages of the classroom action research. The average participation percentage increased from 49.22% in the pre-cycle to 71.48% in Cycle I and 91.41% in Cycle II. The proportion of students achieving the Active or Very Active category increased from 0% to 62.5% and finally to 100%. The success criterion of at least 75% was therefore achieved in Cycle II. Within the context of this classroom action research, the findings indicate that the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game, together with improvements made through the action-reflection cycle, was accompanied by increased student participation in cultural identity learning. The board game provided structured opportunities for interaction, discussion, cooperation, responses to challenges, and reflection, making it a potentially useful instructional activity for encouraging active participation in elementary cultural identity learning.

Analysis

The analysis was conducted using descriptive quantitative analysis by comparing the student participation scores across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The analysis focused on the total score, mean score, average participation percentage, and the proportion of students who achieved the Active or Very Active category. The interpretation of the findings was supported by recent literature on game-based learning, student engagement, and board-game use in primary education.

In the pre-cycle, the eight students obtained a total participation score of 126. This score was obtained by summing the individual scores of the eight students and resulted in a mean score of 15.75 out of a maximum score of 32. The average participation percentage was 49.22%, which was categorized as Fairly Active. None of the students achieved the Active or Very Active category. This result indicates that student participation before the intervention was still relatively limited. Students were involved in the learning process, but opportunities to express ideas, participate in group discussions, respond to questions or challenges, cooperate with peers, and engage in reflection had not yet been demonstrated consistently.

After the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game was implemented in Cycle I, the total participation score increased to 183. This total was obtained from the individual scores of Balin (24), Balqis (19), Dila (24), Citra (24), Faiz (25), Novi (23), Satya (19), and Shafea (25). The mean score therefore increased to 22.88 out of 32, while the average participation percentage increased to 71.48%. This represented an increase of 22.26 percentage points compared with the pre-cycle. The proportion of students achieving the Active or Very Active category also increased from 0 of 8 students (0%) in the pre-cycle to 5 of 8 students (62.5%) in Cycle I. Thus, the first cycle showed a substantial improvement in observable student participation, although the predetermined success criterion of at least 75% had not yet been achieved.

The improvement in Cycle I can be interpreted in relation to the characteristics of game-based learning. Game-based learning can provide students with more interactive learning experiences and opportunities to participate directly in learning activities. Guan et al. (2024), through a systematic review of 35 experimental studies in primary education, found that game-based learning has been used to support learning in primary classrooms and provides empirical evidence that can inform the design of game-based learning experiences for pupils. Similarly, Ruiz et al. (2024) reviewed 90 interventions concerning gamification and school engagement in primary and secondary education and emphasized the relationship between game-based strategies and dimensions of school engagement, including participation and motivation. These findings provide a basis for interpreting the increase in participation observed after the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game.

The findings are also consistent with recent research specifically concerning board games in primary classrooms. Yuliani and Juhana (2025) conducted a systematic literature review of board-game use in elementary education and reported that board games have potential to strengthen student engagement and active participation by creating interactive and enjoyable learning environments. The authors also highlighted the role of game elements such as challenges, scores, and rewards in supporting students’ social and cognitive engagement. In the present study, the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game similarly provided structured opportunities for students to interact with group members, respond to questions and challenges, cooperate, and participate in learning activities. Therefore, the increase from 49.22% to 71.48% can be interpreted as an indication that the board-game activity created more opportunities for students to participate directly in the learning process.

However, the Cycle I result did not yet meet the research success criterion. Although the class average had reached the Active category, only 62.5% of students were categorized as Active or Very Active, which was below the predetermined target of 75%. This finding became the basis for reflection and improvement in Cycle II. The instructional improvements focused on providing more equitable opportunities for participation, strengthening group discussion and interaction, encouraging students to respond to questions and challenges, and providing opportunities for reflection after the

learning activity. Thus, Cycle II was not simply a repetition of Cycle I but represented an improvement in the implementation based on the conditions identified during the first cycle.

The results of Cycle II showed a further increase in student participation. The total participation score reached 234, with a mean score of 29.25 out of 32. The average participation percentage increased to 91.41%, placing the class in the Very Active category. Compared with Cycle I, the average participation percentage increased by 19.93 percentage points, while the increase from the pre-cycle to Cycle II reached 42.19 percentage points. More importantly, all eight students achieved the Active or Very Active category, resulting in a proportion of 100%. Six students were categorized as Very Active and two students as Active. Therefore, the success criterion of at least 75% of students achieving the Active or Very Active category was exceeded in Cycle II.

The Cycle II finding is particularly relevant to the context of cultural identity learning in PPKn. Sholikhah et al. (2024) examined the use of the “Guess Who?” educational board game in PPKn learning at the elementary school level. Their study reported that the board game supported students’ concentration, active participation, and understanding of Civics content. Although the learning content and research design differ from the present study, the similarity in the use of board games within elementary PPKn learning provides relevant contextual support for the present finding. In the “Sahabat Bhinneka” implementation, the board game was not used merely for entertainment but was integrated into learning activities related to cultural identity and required students to interact, discuss, respond, cooperate, and reflect.

The progression of the data demonstrates a consistent improvement across the three research stages. The average participation percentage increased from 49.22% in the pre-cycle to 71.48% in Cycle I and 91.41% in Cycle II. At the same time, the proportion of students achieving the Active or Very Active category increased from 0% to 62.5% and finally to 100%. The pattern suggests that the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game, together with the instructional improvements made through the action-reflection process, was accompanied by increased student participation. The finding is also consistent with the broader conclusion of recent research that game-based approaches can support student engagement when game activities are meaningfully integrated into the learning process (Guan et al., 2024; Ruiz et al., 2024).

The increase should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. The study involved only eight Grade 4 students in one classroom and did not employ a comparison group. Therefore, the findings do not establish that the board game alone caused the improvement. The increase may also have been influenced by students’ increasing familiarity with the learning activities and by the instructional refinements introduced between cycles. Accordingly, the most appropriate interpretation is that the implementation and refinement of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game within the classroom action research process were accompanied by a substantial improvement in observable student participation.

Overall, the analysis shows that student participation moved from the Fairly Active category in the pre-cycle to the Active category in Cycle I and the Very Active category in Cycle II. The achievement of 100% of students in the Active or Very Active categories in Cycle II exceeded the predetermined success criterion of 75%. These findings provide classroom-based evidence that the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game, when integrated with structured learning activities and improved through reflection across action cycles, can provide meaningful opportunities for active student participation in cultural identity learning.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game was accompanied by an improvement in student participation in cultural identity learning among Grade 4 students at SDN 1 Bantengan. Student participation increased progressively across the classroom action research stages, with the average participation percentage rising from 49.22% in the pre-cycle, categorized as Fairly Active, to 71.48% in Cycle I, categorized as Active, and 91.41% in Cycle II, categorized as Very Active. The proportion of students achieving the Active or Very Active category increased from 0% in the pre-cycle to 62.5% in Cycle I and 100% in Cycle II. The achievement in Cycle II exceeded the predetermined success criterion of at least 75% of students reaching the Active or Very Active category.

The findings indicate that the “Sahabat Bhinneka” board game can provide structured opportunities for students to participate through interaction, group discussion, responses to questions and challenges, cooperation, involvement in learning activities, and reflection. The improvement across cycles also shows the importance of combining the learning medium with an action-reflection process so that the implementation can be refined according to students’ participation needs.

From a knowledge perspective, this study contributes classroom-based evidence that a culturally contextualized board game can be used as an instructional strategy to support observable student participation in cultural identity learning at the elementary school level. The study also highlights that the educational value of a board game is connected not only to its game format but also to its integration with learning objectives and meaningful opportunities for student interaction.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that elementary teachers can consider culturally contextualized board games as an alternative learning strategy for creating more interactive and participatory learning experiences, particularly when learning content requires students to communicate, cooperate, respond, and reflect. However, the findings are limited to eight Grade 4 students in one classroom and should therefore be interpreted as classroom-based evidence rather than generalized causal evidence. Further research involving larger and more diverse groups of students and different educational contexts is needed to examine the applicability of culturally contextualized board games more broadly.

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