

**EFFORTS TO INCREASE STUDENTS' ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN
SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING THROUGH THE USE OF SYMBOLIC
REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IN FOURTH GRADE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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ABSTRACT

Active participation is one of the key indicators of successful learning. However, in reality, active participation remains relatively low. Therefore, this study aims to increase students' active participation through the application of symbolic rewards and punishments in social studies lessons on needs and wants in fourth-grade elementary school classes. The study employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) design by Kemmis and McTaggart, conducted over two cycles. The research subjects consisted of 26 students. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, field notes, and document analysis. The results showed that initially, student participation was still low and uneven. In the first cycle, most students fell into the active category (54%), but there were still students in the somewhat active category (23%). After improvements were made in Cycle II, there was a significant increase, with 88% of students reaching the very active category and 12% in the active category. Questionnaire results also showed positive responses from students toward the implementation of this strategy, which was able to boost students' enthusiasm, courage, and discipline. Thus, the application of symbolic rewards and punishments is effective in increasing students' active participation and creating a more engaging and interactive learning atmosphere.

Keywords: *Active participation, symbolic rewards and punishments, social studies learning, classroom action research, elementary school*

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INTRODUCTION

Active student participation in the learning process is a key indicator of success in achieving learning objectives. Direct student engagement through asking questions, answering, and discussing not only enhances conceptual understanding but also fosters the development of critical and social thinking skills. In the context of Social Studies (IPS) learning in elementary school, active student participation is relevant to learning because this subject aims to build students' social and civic competencies as preparation for life in society (Hopeman et al., 2022). However, in reality, various findings indicate that student participation levels remain relatively low. Observation results indicate that student participation reaches only about 42%, and students' enthusiasm for participating in learning remains low (Amin & Aulyah, 2025). This situation indicates a gap between expectations of active learning and the reality on the ground.

The issue of low student active participation was also identified based on interview results, particularly in Grade 4 at Citimun 1 Public Elementary School. Interviews with teachers revealed that the number of students actively asking questions and expressing opinions remains limited, with only about 7 to 9 students asking questions and 5 to 6 students offering opinions out of a total of 26 students. This reinforces the data that the majority of students still tend to be passive in their learning. This low level of engagement may be influenced by a lack of variety in teaching strategies, making the learning process monotonous and uninteresting (Restu Kurnia et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2024). In fact, appropriate teaching strategies have been proven to significantly increase student participation, whether in asking questions, answering, or discussing. This aligns with motivation theory, which states that a learning environment that supports students' basic needs will enhance motivation, initiative, and engagement in learning. Active student participation is a key indicator of learning success, as it demonstrates students' physical and mental engagement throughout the learning process (Apriliani et al., 2024).

One strategy with the potential to increase students' active participation is the application of rewards and punishments in the learning process. Rewards function as positive reinforcement that can encourage students to exhibit active behavior, while punishments are used to guide students' behavior to align with established rules. However, in previous research, studies have predominantly focused on the use of rewards and punishments in general forms, whereas the application of symbolic rewards and punishments remains relatively limited. Symbolic forms, such as adding or subtracting points, are considered psychologically safer and remain effective in shaping student behavior. This limitation indicates a research gap that requires further investigation, particularly in the context of social studies learning in elementary schools.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on learning strategies aimed at enhancing student participation. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as an alternative solution for teachers in creating more

interactive, engaging, and meaningful learning experiences, thereby optimally enhancing student engagement in the learning process. A learning environment that meets students' motivational needs can enhance their initiative, engagement, and enthusiasm for learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Based on these issues, the research questions in this study are: (1) what are the initial conditions of student participation during the learning process prior to the implementation of symbolic rewards and punishments; (2) how does the implementation of symbolic rewards and punishments enhance students' active participation; and (3) what are the results of applying symbolic rewards and punishments in enhancing students' active participation. In line with the research questions, this study aims to enhance students' active participation through the application of symbolic rewards and punishments regarding the "needs and wants" material in fourth-grade elementary school. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on learning strategies focused on improving student participation. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as an alternative for teachers in creating more interactive, engaging, and meaningful learning experiences.

Previous research has shown that the application of rewards and punishments can increase learning motivation and student learning outcomes. However, most studies still focus on the use of rewards and punishments in general forms, such as giving gifts, verbal praise, or conventional punishments. Therefore, this study specifically examines the use of symbolic rewards and punishments to increase students' active participation in social studies learning in elementary schools, an area that remains limited. Furthermore, while other studies have focused more on learning outcomes and motivation, this study focuses on student active participation; thus, it aims to address this gap by examining symbolic rewards and punishments as a means to enhance student active participation in social studies learning in elementary schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design used was Classroom Action Research (CAR), which was chosen because the issues under study stemmed from classroom teaching practices and required solutions through concrete actions. CAR is a form of reflective research conducted by teachers or researchers to continuously improve the quality of the learning process. This study employs the CLA model proposed by Kemmis & McTaggart, which is conducted in the form of a cyclical process comprising four main stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Hussen et al., 2024).

In the planning stage, the researcher identifies problems through initial observations and interviews with teachers, then prepares learning tools such as teaching modules, symbolic reward and punishment instruments, as well as observation and evaluation sheets. The action implementation stage is carried out by implementing the prepared lesson plans, including the application of symbolic

rewards and punishments in learning activities to increase students' active participation. Next, the observation stage is conducted systematically throughout the learning process in each cycle to collect data regarding the implementation of the interventions and changes in student participation. The final stage is reflection, which involves a collaborative evaluation activity between the researcher and the teacher to analyze the results of the interventions and formulate improvements for the next cycle. This cycle is repeated until an increase in students' active participation is achieved in accordance with the established indicators (Amalia & Utami, 2025).

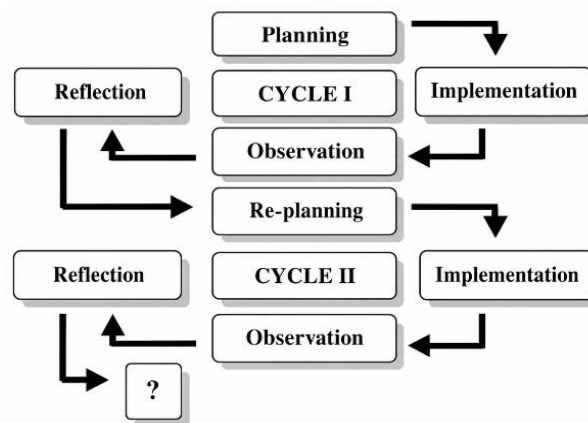


Figure 1.
Kemmis & Mc. Taggart Cyclical Process

The subjects of this study were all fourth-grade students and teachers at Citimun 1 Public Elementary School during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, comprising a total of 26 students, 12 boys and 14 girls. The selection of research subjects was based on preliminary observations and interviews regarding the issue of students' active participation in social studies learning, as well as the application of rewards and punishments in Grade 4 at Citimun 1 Public Elementary School. In this study, prior to the fundraising process and the implementation of cycles 1 and 2, all parties serving as research subjects had given their consent to participate in the research activities.

The indicators of active participation in this study, as proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004) are as follows:

Table 1.
Indicators of Active Participation

No.	Aspects of Observation	Indicators of Active Participation
1.	Behavioral Engagement	Answering questions Asking questions Sharing opinions Completing assignments Following rules

No.	Aspects of Observation	Indicators of Active Participation
2.	Emotional Engagement	Showing enthusiasm Showing confidence
3.	Cognitive Engagement	Understanding the material by drawing conclusions

The assessment in the observation used a 1–4 Likert scale, with the following breakdown:

Table 2.

Level of active participation

Score	Evaluation Criteria
4	Very active
3	Active
2	Fairly active
1	Less active

The maximum score for this assessment is 32, calculated by multiplying the 8 participation indicators by 4 (the highest score), using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage formula: } \frac{\text{Total Score Obtained}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100 = \dots \%$$

Table 3.

Percentage of Active Participation

Percentage Range	Category
81% - 100%	Very Active
61% - 80%	Active
41% - 60%	Moderately Active
≤40%	Less Active

The triangulation method used in this study is methodological triangulation, in which data are obtained from the same source but using different collection techniques. The consistency of data obtained through interviews, observations, questionnaires, field notes, and documentation will be examined. Before the questionnaire, teaching modules, and materials to be used in the action cycle are implemented, they will first be validated by elementary school teacher education faculty regarding the questionnaire, and by classroom teachers regarding the teaching modules and learning materials. This validation aims to assess the alignment between the indicators and the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Pre-Research Data Results

Based on interviews with classroom teachers, an initial picture of student activity and active participation in the learning process was obtained. In general,

student characteristics showed variation in learning activities. Some students have shown confidence in answering questions, asking questions, and expressing opinions, but others still tend to be passive and lack self-confidence. Differences in student characteristics affect students' levels of self-confidence, enthusiasm, and understanding. Students with higher cognitive abilities tend to have greater self-confidence and are more active in learning activities. Conversely, students with lower cognitive abilities tend to be less active, less focused, and show limited participation.

Students' active participation during learning is generally assessed based on cognitive learning outcomes as well as observations of student behavior in completing tasks and following classroom rules. Students with a good level of understanding are seen as more diligent and consistent in completing tasks, both individually and in groups. Student activities such as asking and answering questions occur more frequently in group work, although this still depends on each student's individual character. Factors influencing student engagement and self-confidence include intelligence level, social environment, and support from the family environment. Students who receive positive support from their environment tend to be more confident and enthusiastic about learning.

In terms of participation, there were about 7 students classified as active, while 19 students fell into the fairly active category. All students were found to be able to follow classroom rules; however, in terms of enthusiasm, there were still about 2 students who had not yet demonstrated optimal engagement. Additionally, only about 4 students are able to draw conclusions from the learning material independently. The teacher has implemented several learning strategies, such as experimental activities and out-of-class learning, which are considered quite effective in increasing student participation.

Rewards were also given as an effort to motivate students (Deci et al., 1999). Therefore, follow-up efforts, such as asking more intensive open-ended questions, are needed to increase active student participation more evenly. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that student activity and participation in learning still need to be improved, especially in terms of the courage to ask questions, express opinions, and draw conclusions from the learning material.

Cycle 1 Data Results

The implementation of the intervention in Cycle 1 took place on Friday, February 27, 2026, for 2 × 35 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for students to complete a questionnaire as an evaluation. The lesson was conducted using the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model combined with a symbolic reward and punishment strategy. The application of this strategy was designed to encourage student engagement through symbolic positive and negative reinforcement during the learning process. The implementation stages followed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) process, which includes planning, implementation, observation, and reflection.

The results of observations of students' active participation during the learning process in the social studies subject on needs and wants in Grade 4 at Citimun 1 Public Elementary School showed that students fell into different categories of active participation indicators. The following is data from observations of students' active participation in Cycle 1:

Table 4.

Results of Observations on Active Student Participation		
Categories	Number of Students	%
Less Active	-	-
Quite Active	6	23%
Active	14	54%
Highly Active	6	23%

Based on observational data, student active participation was assessed using three main indicators: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement, which were broken down into eight operational indicators. The observation results showed that student participation levels fell into various categories. In general, no students were found in the "less active" category, indicating that all students had begun to engage in learning, albeit at different levels. A total of 6 students (23%) fell into the moderately active category, with a percentage range of 41%–60%. In this group, students generally began to demonstrate engagement in several indicators, such as answering questions, following rules, and completing assignments, although not consistently. Furthermore, the majority of students 14 students (54%) were in the active category with a range of 61%–80%, characterized by increased boldness in expressing opinions, as well as the emergence of self-confidence and enthusiasm in learning. The very active category was achieved by 6 students (23%) with a range of 81%–100%, indicating high engagement across nearly all participation indicators. The next category is the "moderately active" category. Based on observations during Cycle 1, 6 students fell into this category with an activity percentage range of 41% to 60%. Thus, this indicates that 23% of students have demonstrated self-engagement by showing activity levels that fall within the moderately active category. Students in this category generally begin to show their activity only in a few indicators at an adequate level. The indicators typically achieved in this category include answering questions, following rules, and completing assignments. Although each student's engagement in this category has not yet been consistently demonstrated, they have shown engagement and require further encouragement.

Quantitatively, the distribution of student active participation in Cycle I indicates that the majority of students have reached the active category, although the proportion of students in the highly active category remains limited. These findings suggest that the implementation of symbolic rewards and punishments is beginning to have a positive impact on student engagement in learning, though it is not yet fully optimal. The calculation of student participation percentages was

conducted by comparing the scores obtained with the maximum score, then converting them into percentages to determine the categories of student activity.

As supporting data for the researcher's observations of active student participation, the learning process during Cycle 1 was reinforced by the results of a questionnaire completed by students to understand how these responses were directly perceived by students during the implementation of the symbolic reward and punishment strategies. This student questionnaire contained 10 statements and 3 questions with the following response criteria: strongly agree (SS), agree (S), and disagree (KS). The following is a summary of the questionnaire results from a total of 26 students, presented in the table below:

Table 5.
Results of Student Observations

No.	Statement	Percentage		
		SS	S	KS
1.	I feel more enthusiastic about participating in learning when teachers give rewards.	88%	12%	0%
2.	The rewards given by the teacher made me bolder to be active in learning.	38%	46%	15%
3.	The punishment given made me more careful in my behavior.	73%	15%	12%
4.	The punishment given is not scary but gives education.	69%	31%	0%
5.	I understand the rules of reward and punishment applied by teachers.	77%	19%	4%
6.	With rewards, I became more courageous in giving my opinion.	58%	38%	4%
7.	Learning becomes more engaging when using rewards and punishment.	85%	15%	0%
8.	I became more enthusiastic to ask questions, answer, and give opinions when I was rewarded.	77%	23%	0%
9.	I try to follow the rules of learning as they apply rewards and punishments.	58%	42%	0%
10.	Rewards and punishments make the classroom atmosphere more orderly and comfortable.	81%	19%	0%

The findings from the observations were supported by data from student questionnaires administered after the lesson. The questionnaire results showed that the majority of students responded positively to the use of symbolic reward and punishment strategies. Most students agreed or strongly agreed that rewards were able to boost their enthusiasm, confidence, and engagement in learning. Additionally, punishment was also cited as a form of reinforcement that is educational and does not instill fear, but rather helps students become more disciplined and cautious in their behavior. However, a small number of students admitted to disagreeing, particularly regarding aspects of courage and

understanding of the rules implemented, indicating that student engagement has not yet been optimally distributed evenly.

The results of the open-ended questionnaire also provide a deeper insight into students' learning experiences. Most students stated that learning became more enjoyable, engaging, and helped increase their active participation. The majority of students also acknowledged that the implementation of punishment made them more cautious in their behavior. Additionally, students offered several suggestions for improving learning, such as the need to incorporate various games and activities, as well as a desire to repeat the learning process using the same strategy. These findings indicate that the implemented strategy not only impacts cognitive aspects but also provides students with a positive emotional learning experience.

Overall, the results of Cycle I indicate that the use of symbolic rewards and punishments can increase students' active participation; however, the improvement has not yet reached an optimal level. Therefore, improvements are needed in the next cycle, particularly in enhancing the consistency of student engagement and expanding the variety of learning activities so that student participation can develop more evenly.

Cycle 2 Data Results

The implementation of the action in Cycle II will take place on April 4, 2026, with a time allocation of 3 × 35 minutes. The learning process will continue to use the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model combined with symbolic reward and punishment strategies. In this cycle, the action focuses on addressing the findings from Cycle I, particularly in increasing student engagement across the class, clarifying rules, and enhancing the variety of learning activities. The implementation continues to follow the stages of Classroom Action Research (PTK), which include planning, implementation, observation, and reflection.

Observation results indicate a significant increase in active student participation compared to Cycle I. All students have reached the active to very active categories, with no students in the less active or moderately active categories. Most students demonstrated high engagement in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement indicators. This improvement is evident in students' confidence in asking questions, expressing opinions, and in their increased self-confidence and enthusiasm during learning.

Table 6.

Results of Observation of Active Student Participation		
Categories	Number of Students	%
Less Active	0	0%
Quite Active	0	0%
Active	3	12%
Highly Active	23	88%
Total	26	100%

According to Table 1, 23 students (88%) fell into the “very active” category, while 3 students (12%) were in the “active” category. No students were in the “less active” or “moderately active” categories. This indicates that the improvement measures implemented in Cycle II successfully maximized student engagement. This improvement also indicates that the implementation of rewards can boost students’ motivation to learn, while educational discipline helps foster discipline during the learning process.

Although the majority of students have reached the “very active” category, there are still some students in the “active” category. This suggests that the increase in participation has not been entirely uniform, particularly in indicators such as drawing conclusions and having the courage to ask questions. However, overall, there was a significant improvement compared to the previous cycle, and the cycle termination target was met: 22 out of 26 students ($\pm 85\%$) were in the “very active” learning category based on the results of observations of student active participation.

The observation findings are reinforced by the results of the student response questionnaire, which show an increase in positive perceptions of the implementation of learning strategies. The majority of students responded “strongly agree” and “agree” to almost all indicators, indicating that symbolic reward and punishment strategies are effective in boosting students’ enthusiasm, courage, and engagement in learning.

Table 7.
Summary of Student Questionnaire Results

No.	Statement	Percentage		
		SS	S	KS
1.	I feel more enthusiastic about participating in learning when teachers give rewards.	73%	27%	0%
2.	The rewards given by the teacher made me bolder to be active in learning.	65%	31%	4%
3.	The punishment given made me more careful in my behavior.	73%	27%	0%
4.	The punishment given is not scary but provides education.	62%	31%	8%
5.	I understand the rules of reward and punishment applied by teachers.	77%	23%	0%
6.	With rewards, I became more courageous in giving my opinion.	58%	35%	8%
7.	Learning becomes more engaging when using rewards and punishment.	62%	38%	0%
8.	I became more enthusiastic to ask questions, answer, and give opinions when I was rewarded.	77%	23%	0%
9.	I try to follow the rules of learning as they apply rewards and punishments.	81%	19%	0%
10.	Rewards and punishments make the classroom atmosphere more orderly and comfortable.	65%	31%	4%

The questionnaire results show that there were no dominant negative responses, and the percentage of students who disagreed decreased compared to Cycle I. This indicates that the improvements made in Cycle II successfully increased student acceptance of the strategies implemented. Additionally, the results of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire indicate that students feel that learning has become more enjoyable, engaging, and has boosted their self-confidence. Most students also stated that punishment helped them to be more careful in their behavior.

Table 8.
The Results of The Student Questionnaire in The Form of Questions

1		%	2		%
Happy	17	65%	Yes	23	88%
Happy	3	12%	Disagree	3	12%
Exciting	1	4%			
Spirit	1	4%			
Feeling cool	1	4%			
More confidence	3	12%			
Total	26	100%	Total	26	100%

3		%
Learning is fun	11	42%
Playing games often	6	23%
More questions	3	12%
Feeling like repeating	5	19%
Reward amount added	1	4%
Total	26	100%

Overall, the results of Cycle II indicate that the implementation of symbolic reward and punishment strategies was effective in increasing students' active participation. This increase is evident in the rise in the number of students in the "very active" category and in students' positive responses to the learning process. Consequently, the interventions implemented in Cycle II met the established success indicators, so the study was not continued into the next cycle.

However, based on the researcher's field notes during the implementation of Cycle 1, there were still some students who appeared hesitant to express their opinions and tended to wait for instructions from the teacher before daring to show active participation in the learning activities. This increase in active participation not only indicates the success of the interventions but also demonstrates a change in student behavior during the learning process. Symbolic rewards, which function as positive reinforcement, provide immediate recognition for behaviors aligned with expectations such as asking questions, answering, and

sharing opinions. Additionally, students become more willing to participate because they receive tangible, clear recognition. Meanwhile, symbolic punishment serves as a reminder for students to be more disciplined and follow the rules without instilling fear when they exhibit inappropriate behavior. Therefore, the application of these symbolic rewards and punishments not only influences students' behavioral aspects but also enhances their emotional and cognitive engagement in the learning process.

DISCUSSION

Cycle 1 Activities

The implementation of the intervention in Cycle 1 utilized the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model combined with a strategy of symbolic rewards and punishments in social studies instruction on needs and wants. The stages of Classroom Action Research (PTK) followed the Kemmis & McTaggart model, namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. During the planning stage, the researcher systematically designed all research requirements, including determining the time and location of implementation, preparing learning materials, and preparing research instruments such as observation sheets, questionnaires, and field notes. The lesson was designed using the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model with symbolic reward and punishment strategies. This planning aligns with the view that the planning stage in action research must include detailed and targeted action scenarios to ensure effective implementation.

The implementation stage involves carrying out the planned activities. The learning process began with an opening activity that revealed students' initial readiness, though some students remained unfocused and hesitant to answer the highlighted questions. During the core activities, the application of the TGT model combined with symbolic reward and punishment strategies began to encourage student engagement, particularly in games and worksheet completion. However, active student participation remained limited, as some students only became involved after receiving direct prompts or rewards. This indicates that student engagement is still in its early stages and has not yet developed optimally. Theoretically, active participation is characterized not only by physical presence but also by genuine engagement in learning activities such as asking questions, answering, and expressing opinions. This aligns with E.L. Thorndike's Law of Readiness (Yeni & Marisa, 2021) which states that students who are better prepared to engage in the learning process are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors.

During the game and tournament phases, student engagement began to increase, particularly in behavioral engagement aspects, such as following rules, answering questions, and completing tasks. These findings align with the concept of student engagement proposed by Fredricks et al., which posits that active participation encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Furthermore, the application of symbolic punishment in the form of a cross has

been proven to guide student behavior toward greater discipline and compliance with rules, as noted that punishment functions as a means of behavioral control in learning (Syawaludin & Marmoah, 2018).

During the observation phase, some students fell into the “moderately active” category (23%), with engagement characteristics still limited to specific indicators such as answering questions, following rules, and completing tasks. Students in this “moderately active” category tended to exhibit behavioral engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Ningsih, 2025). This condition indicates that the stimuli provided through rewards and punishments are beginning to be effective, but have not yet been able to encourage consistent participation across all indicators. Meanwhile, the majority of students (54%) have reached the active category, characterized by increased courage to speak up, self-confidence, and enthusiasm in participating in learning activities (Buton & Salamor, 2024). This finding aligns with the theory that positive reinforcement can enhance students’ intrinsic motivation and learning engagement.

On the other hand, the “highly active” category reached only 23%, thus failing to meet the optimal target expected in this class action research. This indicates that the implemented strategies still need improvement, particularly regarding the equitable distribution of student engagement. These differences in participation levels may be influenced by internal factors such as self-confidence and readiness to learn, as well as external factors such as understanding the mechanisms of the rewards and punishments applied. Theoretically, these findings can be explained through the behaviorist approach proposed by B.F. Skinner, in which behaviors reinforced with positive rewards tend to be repeated, while punishment serves to reduce undesirable behaviors. In this context, symbolic rewards in the form of stars can boost students’ motivation and courage, while symbolic punishments help guide student behavior toward greater discipline. However, the effectiveness of this strategy is limited because some students still do not fully understand the mechanisms and objectives behind the application of rewards and punishments.

The results of the student questionnaire reinforce the observational findings, as the majority of students demonstrated positive responses to learning that was perceived as more enjoyable and engaging. This indicates an improvement in emotional engagement, specifically the emergence of joy and enthusiasm in participating in learning. These findings align with previous research stating that enjoyable learning can enhance student motivation and engagement. However, some students still do not feel more confident or disciplined, suggesting that internal factors such as self-confidence and motivation also influence active student participation.

The reflection phase revealed that the implementation of Cycle 1 still faced several challenges, including uneven student engagement due to the dominance of group work, the application of rewards and punishments that were not yet structured and consistent, and game design that did not fully support active participation indicators. Additionally, external factors such as learning conditions

during the month of Ramadan also affected students' concentration and motivation levels. Therefore, improvements are needed in Cycle 2, including an emphasis on individual activities, the implementation of a more transparent point system, and the development of more interactive learning activities aligned with active participation indicators. Students' motivation and self-confidence in learning influence their active engagement during the learning process (Syahid, 2019).

Overall, the implementation of symbolic reward and punishment strategies in Cycle 1 has had a positive impact on students' active participation; however, the results obtained have not been optimal. Therefore, improvements are needed in the next cycle, particularly in clarifying rules, enhancing the consistency of implementation, and providing more equitable incentives so that all students can achieve the "very active" category.

Cycle 2 Activities

This class action research was structured according to the stages outlined in the Kemmis and McTaggart model, namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, action planning was conducted based on the results of reflection from Cycle 1. Improvements focused on optimizing individual student engagement, enhancing the mechanisms for implementing symbolic rewards and punishments through a transparent point-based assessment system, and developing learning activities more aligned with indicators of active student participation. This planning aligns with the principle that in classroom action research, the planning stage must be based on previous reflections so that the interventions are more targeted.

The implementation stage involves carrying out the improved plan. Instruction continues to use the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model, but with an emphasis on individual participation. The application of rewards is carried out more systematically through the awarding of points that are immediately visible to students, while symbolic punishments are consistently applied as a form of negative reinforcement. This improvement has been proven to increase student motivation and engagement, as the provision of clear and structured reinforcement can strengthen positive behaviors in learning. Additionally, the use of the game- and competition-based TGT model has proven effective in creating an active and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

During the observation phase, the results showed a significant improvement compared to Cycle 1. Observation data indicated that approximately 88% of students fell into the "very active" category, while the remaining 12% were in the "active" category, with no students in the "moderately active" or "less active" categories. This indicates that student participation has developed optimally and evenly across all indicators, including behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. These findings align with the view that active student participation is demonstrated not only through physical engagement but also through students' emotional and cognitive engagement in the

learning process. This significant improvement also indicates that learning strategies combining cooperative learning and behavioral reinforcement are capable of enhancing the quality of student learning (Holis et al., 2025).

Compared to Cycle 1, the increase in the “very active” category from 23% to 88% indicates the significant effectiveness of the interventions. This reinforces the behaviorist theory proposed by B.F. Skinner that behaviors receiving positive reinforcement tend to be repeated, while punishment serves as a control for unexpected behaviors. In this context, symbolic rewards can enhance learning motivation, while symbolic punishment helps foster student discipline, thereby creating a more conducive learning environment. During the reflection phase, the analysis results indicate that the interventions in Cycle 2 achieved the established success indicators: the majority of students fell into the “very active” category, with a total of 22 out of 26 students (approximately 85%) classified as “very active” in learning based on observations of their active participation. The reason the success indicator was set at a minimum of 85% is based on the characteristics of classroom action research, which aims for classical learning improvement; thus, the success of this classroom action is not merely judged by individual improvement but by the achievement of the majority of students in the class.

Student engagement is no longer dominated by specific individuals but has been distributed evenly among all students. Additionally, students demonstrated increased courage to express their thoughts, self-confidence, and the ability to summarize the material. This indicates that the improvements in learning strategies implemented in Cycle 2 have successfully enhanced the overall quality of students’ active participation. Therefore, this study does not need to proceed to the next cycle because the research objectives have been optimally achieved.

Overall, the results of Cycle 2 confirm that the application of symbolic reward and punishment strategies combined with the TGT model is effective in increasing students’ active participation. In Handayani et al. (2023), the authors state that the provision of rewards is effective in increasing students’ motivation to learn, thereby making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging. This finding reinforces previous research results stating that the use of interactive learning strategies and appropriate behavioral reinforcement can create more meaningful learning and significantly increase student engagement.

Although the majority of students fall into the “very active” category, there are still students in the “active” category; thus, these findings indicate that increased active participation is influenced not only by reward and punishment strategies but also by individual factors such as self-confidence levels, readiness to learn, and differences in student characteristics. Therefore, these symbolic reward and punishment strategies need to be combined with other learning approaches capable of supporting students’ diverse characteristics so that increased participation can be achieved more optimally.

Attached below is a table showing the development of students' active participation based on data from the pre-study, Cycle I intervention, and Cycle II intervention.

Table 9.
Trends in Student Active Participation

Category	Pre-Research	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Very Active	0%	23%	88%
Active	27%	54%	12%
Fairly Active	73%	23%	0%
Less Active	0%	0%	0%

The summary table showing the development of students' active participation through the use of symbolic rewards and punishments indicates an increase in the "very active" category and a decrease in the "fairly active" and "active" categories. Thus, the use of symbolic rewards and punishments is effective in increasing students' active participation.

CONCLUSION

The process of implementing symbolic rewards and punishments involves providing positive reinforcement in the form of points and symbolic rewards, as well as negative reinforcement in the form of symbolic educational consequences. The implementation of this strategy encourages students to be more actively involved in learning activities, more confident, more disciplined, and more enthusiastic about participating in learning activities. Improvements in Cycle II through the reinforcement of rules, the implementation of a more transparent point system, and an emphasis on individual participation proved capable of increasing student engagement more optimally and evenly.

The research results indicate that the use of symbolic rewards and punishments is effective in creating a more interactive, enjoyable, and meaningful learning environment, thereby increasing students' active participation in social studies learning. These findings reinforce that behavioral reinforcement strategies combined with cooperative learning activities can serve as an alternative approach capable of enhancing student engagement in terms of behavior, emotions, and cognition.

The implications of this study suggest that teachers need to implement varied interactive learning strategies that incorporate positive behavioral reinforcement to encourage students to participate more actively in the learning process. Symbolic rewards and punishments can serve as one alternative strategy that elementary school teachers can apply to improve student motivation, discipline, and engagement in learning activities.

This study has limitations regarding the scope of subjects and learning materials, which were restricted to a single class and a single social studies subject. Therefore, future researchers are advised to conduct similar studies at different

grade levels, in different subjects, or using different learning models, as well as to examine the effects of symbolic rewards and punishments on other aspects such as learning outcomes, learning motivation, and students' social skills.

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