

The Effectiveness of the Project-Based Learning Model in Indonesian Colonial Resistance Learning on Students' Understanding of Indonesian Nationalism at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260208>

ABSTRACT

History learning plays an important role in instilling the values of nationalism in students. One of the factors influencing the success of this learning process is the use of instructional models that actively engage students. The Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model is considered an alternative approach that emphasizes student involvement through meaningful and contextual project activities. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Project-Based Learning model in improving students' understanding of nationalism in history learning at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang. This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design. The research population consisted of all eleventh-grade students at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang. The sample comprised one class as the experimental group and one class as the control group, selected through random sampling. Data were collected using pretest and posttest instruments. Data analysis included normality and homogeneity tests as prerequisite analyses, followed by hypothesis testing using the Independent Samples t-test and N-Gain analysis to determine the level of learning effectiveness.

The results showed that the experimental group achieved an average N-Gain score of 0.4424 (44.24%), while the control group obtained an average N-Gain score of 0.3472 (34.72%). The results of the t-test indicated a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) with a mean difference of -16.300 . These findings indicate that the Project-Based Learning model is more effective than conventional instruction in improving students' understanding of Indonesian nationalism.

Keywords: Nationalism Understanding, Project Based Learning, History Learning, Indonesian National Resistance

INTRODUCTION

History education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and national identity (Siregar & Alwina, 2023). History learning also contributes to the development of students' abilities, particularly through the integration of controversial historical events that can foster democratic character (Ahmad, 2016). In addition, Utomo and Kurniawan (2023) emphasize that history learning has a significant impact on instilling values of patriotism and leadership as exemplified by national heroes. Pramono, Ahmad, and Wijayati (2021) also explain the importance of the relevance of historical figures in

history learning and how mapping figures from different regions can strengthen students' national identity while reducing primordialism. In this context, history teachers play an essential role as a bridge between the struggle against colonialism and students' understanding of freedom, while also guiding students to explore the values, motivations, and impacts of resistance movements (Purnomo, Kurniawan, Em, et al., 2024).

History learning can also shape students' philosophical understanding of nationality, enabling them to express nationalism through moderate attitudes and openness to ideological differences (Purnomo & Kurniawan, 2024). This understanding of nationalism includes love for the homeland, awareness of the nation's historical struggles, and appreciation for the contributions of national heroes. In this regard, learning materials on Indonesian resistance during the colonial period are highly strategic in fostering nationalistic

values among students. However, several studies indicate that many students still experience difficulties in developing a deep understanding of nationalism. Low student engagement, limited comprehension of historical content, and weak internalization of national values suggest that the learning process has not yet been optimal (Shoviana & Haikal, 2022).

This condition is consistent with the results of the researcher's preliminary observations conducted at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang. Classroom observations revealed that students' enthusiasm and active participation in history learning were relatively low. Many students showed limited engagement during lessons, and classroom interactions were dominated by only a small number of students. To obtain a more objective and comprehensive picture of learning conditions, a preliminary observation questionnaire was administered to students. The summarized results of this questionnaire are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Responses to Preliminary Observation Questionnaire

Aspect Evaluated	Disagree	Agree
Interest in history learning	87.05%	12.9%
Use of varied learning methods	93.5%	6.45%
Active participation in learning activities	87.1%	12.9%
Preference for project/group-based learning	0%	100%
Understanding of nationalism values	90.3%	9.7%
Opportunity to express opinions	77.4%	22.6%
Interest in creative tasks (posters, videos, presentations)	3.2%	96.8%
Perceived importance of national struggle values	0%	100%

Source: Research Data 2025

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the majority of students expressed low interest in history learning and limited active participation in classroom activities, as reflected by high levels of disagreement regarding learning interest, teaching methods, and classroom engagement. In contrast, students showed very strong positive responses toward project-based and creative learning activities, such as group projects, posters, and video-based assignments. In addition, although students' understanding of nationalism values had not yet reached an optimal level, almost all students perceived the values of national

struggle as important to be learned in school. These findings suggest that there is substantial potential to improve the quality of history learning through the implementation of more innovative, participatory, and student-centered learning models.

One learning model that has the potential to address these challenges is Project-Based Learning (PJBL). The Project-Based Learning model is considered effective in improving students' understanding because it actively involves students in meaningful projects, encourages critical, creative, and collaborative skills, and facilitates the application of knowledge in real-life contexts

(Harahap, 2023). In the context of learning materials on Indonesian resistance during the colonial period, PJBL not only strengthens students' understanding of national struggles but also fosters nationalism and active student participation (Kurniawan & Sholeh, 2023). This perspective is supported by the findings of Purnomo, Kurniawan, Em, et al. (2024), which show that collective memories of colonial oppression, resistance movements, and the 1945 Proclamation have played an important role in shaping national identity. Understanding historical knowledge and collective memory also significantly influences students' ability to construct historical narratives and develop critical historical awareness (Purnomo, Kurniawan, Romadi, et al., 2024).

This study focuses on examining the effect of implementing the Project-Based Learning model on students' understanding of nationalism in history learning at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang. Although numerous studies have examined PJBL in relation to improving academic achievement and critical thinking skills, research that specifically investigates its impact on affective aspects, particularly students' nationalism understanding, remains limited (Kamaliyah & Alriningrum, 2022; Kurnia, Chairunisa, Zamhari, et al., 2024; Nasyikah, Ahyani, Chairunisa, et al., 2023; Rokhmatin, Leksono, & Rohman, 2023; Salsabila, 2024). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the level of nationalism understanding among students taught using the Project-Based Learning model, compare it with students taught using conventional learning approaches, and examine the effectiveness of PJBL in enhancing students' understanding of nationalism.

Based on this focus, the objectives of this study are to analyze the level of nationalism understanding among Grade XI students at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang who are taught using the Project-Based Learning model, to analyze the level of nationalism understanding among students who are taught without the PJBL model, and to examine the effectiveness of PJBL in

improving students' understanding of nationalism. This research was conducted using learning materials on Indonesian resistance during the colonial period, with evaluations carried out through measurements before and after the implementation of the Project-Based Learning model. In addition to contributing to the development of history learning strategies, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for teachers in designing more creative and contextual learning. Ultimately, the implementation of PJBL is expected to foster not only students' cognitive understanding but also their nationalistic attitudes, enabling history education to play a strategic role in strengthening national unity and sovereignty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory

In this study, the learning approach is grounded in the social constructivism theory developed by Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs most effectively when learners engage in social interaction and collaborative activities. Through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky emphasizes the important role of teachers and peers as facilitators who support students in achieving their learning potential through gradual guidance or scaffolding (Salsabila & Muqowim, 2024). This perspective aligns closely with the Project-Based Learning model, which places students at the center of the learning process and encourages them to work collaboratively in groups to complete meaningful and authentic projects.

In line with this view, Yuberti (2014) explains that constructivism emphasizes the active role of students in constructing knowledge, rather than passively receiving information. Students are expected to think critically, formulate concepts, and assign meaning to learning materials, including content related to Indonesian resistance during the colonial period, which contributes to the development of students'

understanding of Indonesian nationalism. In this approach, teachers function as facilitators rather than as direct transmitters of knowledge. Utomo (2011) also states that constructivist learning emphasizes the construction of knowledge through experience and interaction. Similarly, Wahab and Rosnawati (2011) add that students' knowledge is developed independently through active involvement in a continuous learning process.

The application of constructivist theory to learning materials on Indonesian resistance during the colonial period is consistent with the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model, which requires students to actively seek information, analyze historical issues, and present their learning outcomes. This learning model helps students connect historical content with real experiences while developing critical and collaborative thinking skills. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in improving the understanding of nationalism among Grade XI students at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang through active, meaningful, and contextual learning.

B. Project-Based Learning Model (PJBL)

Educators are required to develop innovative learning models to improve the quality of education, one of which is the Project-Based Learning model that actively involves students in projects with clear learning objectives. Mahmudi and Suryadi (2024) argue that teachers need to adapt learning methods to real conditions in order to strengthen national character and identity through heroic values. Furthermore, Purnomo, Kurniawan, & Romadi (2025) emphasize that history is often taught through a single narrative that highlights national unity and pride, which may limit students' opportunities to think critically. In this context, Project-Based Learning is considered an appropriate strategy because it encourages students to explore various sources, engage in discussions, and produce

creative products that reflect critical understanding while respecting diversity.

In the Project-Based Learning model, students work collaboratively in groups to complete projects that involve exploration, research, problem-solving, collaboration, and presentation (Harahap, 2023). The primary focus of this model is students' active involvement in producing tangible products through processes that include research, analysis, creation, and presentation based on real experiences. The implementation of PJBL follows systematic stages. According to The George Lucas Educational Foundation (as cited in Mahdalena, Ahmadin, & Sulmi, 2023), these stages include (1) starting with essential questions, (2) designing a project plan, (3) developing a schedule, (4) monitoring student and project progress, (5) assessing project outcomes, and (6) conducting evaluations. Research by Sucipto (as cited in Mahdalena, Ahmadin, & Sulmi, 2023) indicates that the Project-Based Learning model can increase students' interest in learning, as reflected in higher levels of participation and improved learning outcomes.

In practice, assessment in Project-Based Learning must also be carefully considered. Product-based assessment, which focuses on students' skills in creating learning products, provides opportunities for students to develop creativity and maximize their potential. Mahdalena, Ahmadin, and Sulmi (2023) state that product assessment can improve students' overall competence. This demonstrates that Project-Based Learning not only promotes academic achievement but also fosters creativity and responsibility in learning. Moreover, this learning model has been shown to support independent and structured learning, enhance academic performance, and improve students' positive attitudes toward learning (Fahlevi, 2024).

The implementation of Project-Based Learning facilitates student-centered learning, as it allows students to engage with real-world problems, formulate questions, plan learning activities, and apply various

strategies to achieve learning objectives. Key components of PJBL, such as collaboration and teamwork, play a significant role in increasing students' confidence, motivation, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Nasution, 2021; Rahmat, 2024; Riyanti, 2024). The "learning by doing" approach in PJBL has been widely recognized as an effective method for helping students understand learning materials more deeply than conventional instructional approaches (Markula & Aksela, 2022). However, despite its many advantages, Project-Based Learning also presents challenges, such as time constraints and unequal participation among students. Some students may have fewer opportunities to contribute or explain their ideas, which can result in the dominance of more active or skilled students during group work. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to design inclusive PJBL strategies that ensure equal participation and provide additional support for students who require guidance. Through careful planning and implementation, the benefits of Project-Based Learning can be maximized while minimizing potential challenges.

C. Understanding Nationalism

Understanding nationalism is a crucial concept in the context of national identity and the sustainability of a nation. Nationalism refers to a form of collective consciousness that binds individuals within a community based on shared cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds (Armawi, 2020; Imtiyaz & Najicha, 2022). In the Indonesian context, nationalism emerged as a response to colonial domination, which fostered public awareness of the importance of unity in the struggle for independence. The development of Indonesian resistance during the colonial period was influenced by various factors, including interactions with global nationalist ideas that emerged in the early twentieth century (Triwiyanto & Junaidin, 2022).

The core elements of nationalism understanding include love for the homeland,

a shared national identity, and sovereignty. Love for the homeland refers to an emotional attachment and sense of belonging to the nation, while shared identity involves recognition of common cultural, historical, and linguistic ties among citizens (Billah, Yunita, Pratama, et al., 2023). Sovereignty reflects the belief that a nation has the right to determine its own destiny. This aspect of nationalism is closely related to the formation of a collective character or national temperament that arises from feelings of solidarity among members of the nation (Kohn, as cited in Armawi, 2020).

In the era of globalization, however, the understanding of nationalism faces various challenges, including the influence of foreign cultures and rapid social change. Globalization affects national identity, but at the same time provides opportunities to strengthen social cohesion and promote a more inclusive understanding of nationalism (Imtiyaz & Najicha, 2022). The influence of social media on nationalism and national integration in the modern era is also complex. On the one hand, social media can serve as a medium to strengthen national awareness and promote national integration.

The importance of instilling a sense of nationalism, therefore, cannot be overlooked, particularly in preparing future generations who demonstrate mutual respect, social responsibility, and commitment to national unity. The younger generation needs to develop a strong sense of nationalism in order to appreciate the historical struggles of the Indonesian nation and to better understand the contemporary context of Indonesia (Awaliyah, Aisiyah, Putra, et al., 2022). Efforts to enhance students' understanding of nationalism are especially important in addressing the challenges posed by the negative influences of social media. In this regard, history education plays a vital role in shaping students' understanding of nationalism by instilling national values, fostering love for the homeland, and deepening awareness of the nation's historical struggles. History serves as an essential teacher of life, as it not only helps

individuals understand the past but also provides a foundation for responsible citizenship and everyday life.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach, which emphasizes the analysis of numerical data that can be measured statistically, while also considering supporting qualitative information. Quantitative research includes various designs, one of which is experimental research, aimed at examining the effect of a specific treatment on changes observed between different groups (Priadana & Sunarsi, 2021). The research design used in this study was a Nonequivalent Control Group Design, which allows researchers to compare the effectiveness of learning outcomes between a group receiving treatment and a group without treatment (Sugiyono, 2022). In this study, class XI-C was designated as the experimental group and was taught using the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model, while class XI-D served as the control group and received conventional instruction without PJBL. The population of this research consisted of all grade XI students, totaling 141 students. The research sample comprised 40 students from classes XI-C and XI-D, selected through purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through pretests and posttests to measure students' understanding of Indonesian nationalism, supported by document analysis and learning documentation. The research instrument used was a multiple-choice test designed to assess students' understanding of nationalism within the History subject. In this study, the independent variable was the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model, while the dependent variable was students' understanding of Indonesian nationalism. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on observations conducted during the teaching assistance program at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang on July 16–18,

2025, it was found that the learning enthusiasm of grade XI students toward History subjects was relatively low. This condition was reflected in students' classroom behavior, such as lack of focus during lessons, talking to peers, falling asleep, drawing unrelated objects, and choosing to sit at the back of the classroom. Although teachers had implemented lecture-based methods accompanied by trigger questions, student participation remained limited and was dominated by only a small number of active students, while the majority tended to be passive. This situation indicates that the learning methods used had not yet been able to fully engage students in active and meaningful learning.

The results of the initial observational questionnaire further supported these findings. Most students stated that they were less interested and less active during History lessons, particularly in class discussions. Students felt that opportunities to express opinions and ideas were still limited, which contributed to passive learning attitudes. However, the questionnaire also revealed positive potential, as students showed high interest in project-based learning activities and responded enthusiastically to creative tasks such as designing posters and producing educational videos. These activities were perceived as more engaging and enjoyable compared to conventional learning methods.

Furthermore, although students' understanding of nationalism values had not yet reached an optimal level, they acknowledged that the values of national struggle are important and necessary to learn. This indicates that students already possess a basic awareness of the significance of historical values, even though their comprehension remains limited. Therefore, these findings suggest strong opportunities to improve the quality of History learning through the implementation of more creative, student-centered, and participatory learning models, such as Project-Based Learning (PJBL), which can enhance students'

motivation, activeness, and understanding of historical and national values.

The implementation of the research in the experimental class was carried out by applying the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model to 20 students over four meetings. The first meeting was conducted on Friday, August 8, 2025, and began with a pretest consisting of 15 multiple-choice questions administered within 30 minutes to measure students' initial understanding of the Indonesian resistance to colonialism. After the pretest, students were divided into groups to determine resistance figures or events to be studied. Each group collected information from textbooks and supporting sources, discussed the focus of the study, and distributed roles among group members. The researcher monitored the discussion process and provided guidance to ensure that activities followed the planned project flow. The second meeting was held on Friday, August 22, 2025, with project development as the main activity. Students continued processing the collected information, developed a content framework, and began collaboratively designing the project products. The researcher provided guidance regarding the accuracy of historical data, relevance of content, and clarity of presentation to ensure alignment with learning objectives. The third meeting was conducted on Monday, August 25, 2025, focusing on project refinement and presentation preparation. Students improved the content and visual appearance of their products, refined language use, and practiced oral presentations with active participation from all group members.

The fourth meeting took place on Friday, August 29, 2025, and was dedicated to project presentations. Each group presented its findings on Indonesian resistance figures

or events and the values of struggle embodied in them. Other groups were encouraged to ask questions and provide responses, fostering academic interaction among students. The researcher observed students' level of engagement, project quality, and group collaboration throughout the activity. After all presentations were completed, students were given a posttest consisting of 15 multiple-choice questions within 30 minutes to assess their understanding of nationalism after the PJBL treatment. The learning activities concluded with a brief reflection on students' learning experiences during the project-based learning process.

Learning in the control class involved 20 students and was conducted using conventional lecture-based instruction over four meetings. During the first meeting, held on Saturday, August 9, 2025, students were given a pretest of 15 multiple-choice questions within 30 minutes to measure their initial abilities. The researcher then delivered material on the background of colonialism and the condition of Indonesian society during the colonial period through systematic oral explanations. The second meeting, held on Saturday, August 23, 2025, focused on discussing Indonesian resistance figures using presentation media. The third meeting was conducted on Monday, August 25, 2025, emphasizing resistance events in various regions presented chronologically, followed by short written assignments to assess student understanding. The fourth meeting took place on Saturday, August 30, 2025, and aimed to reinforce the material and emphasize national struggle values, concluding with a posttest of 15 multiple-choice questions administered within 30 minutes to measure students' understanding of nationalism without PJBL treatment.

Table 2 Category Score

Class	Test Type	Complete	Do not Complete	Average	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Experiment	Pretest	0	20	61.6	20	0%
Control	Pretest	0	20	41.0	20	0%
Experiment	Posttest	13	7	79.0	20	65%
Control	Posttest	2	18	62.7	20	10%

Source: Research Data 2025

The results indicate that learning the History of Indonesian Resistance during the Colonial Period using the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model was more effective in the experimental class. Pretest results showed that the experimental class achieved an average score of 61.6, with 0% of students scoring above 75, while the control class obtained an average score of 41.0, also with 0% achieving scores above 75. These results served as a baseline for comparing students' initial abilities before treatment.

Normality testing using the Shapiro–Wilk test and homogeneity testing using Levene's test indicated that both pretest and posttest data met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, allowing for valid parametric statistical analysis. After the implementation of PJBL, the experimental class achieved an average posttest score of 79.0, with 65% of students scoring above 75. In contrast, the control class obtained an average posttest score of 62.7, with only 10% of students achieving scores above 75.

The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference between the posttest mean scores of the two classes (Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05), with a mean difference of 16.3 points, indicating the superiority of the experimental class. Furthermore, the N-Gain analysis showed that the experimental class achieved an average N-Gain score of 0.4424 (44.24%), categorized as less effective, with values ranging from 0.18 to 0.72 and a relatively small standard deviation (0.13074), indicating a more even improvement among students. Meanwhile, the control class obtained an average N-Gain score of 0.3472 (34.72%), categorized as ineffective, with values ranging from 0.00 to 0.67, indicating greater variation in learning improvement.

These findings demonstrate that the application of the Project-Based Learning model contributes more effectively to improving students' understanding of nationalism compared to conventional instruction. Although the effectiveness level based on N-Gain analysis remains in the less effective category, PJBL resulted in higher

and more evenly distributed learning gains. These results confirm that PJBL has strong potential to be further developed as an effective instructional strategy for fostering students' understanding of nationalism in History learning.

Project-Based Learning (PJBL) is a learning model that emphasizes active student involvement through systematic and product-oriented projects. In this model, students are not only recipients of information from teachers but are encouraged to explore learning resources, process data, engage in discussions, and present their findings both individually and collaboratively (Harahap, 2023; Mahdalena, Ahmadin, & Sulmi, 2023). This learning process promotes critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and responsibility for learning, thereby making the learning experience more meaningful.

In its implementation, teachers function as facilitators who guide, monitor, and provide continuous feedback throughout the project activities (Risky & Liana, 2022; Sari, 2022). PJBL also enhances students' motivation and interest in learning because it involves real-world problems and challenging tasks that are relevant to students' experiences (Marpaung, Margareta, & Manullang, 2024). In the context of History learning, PJBL has been shown to increase students' active participation, creating a collaborative and engaging learning environment (Kurnia, Chairunisa, Zamhari, et al., 2024).

PJBL aligns closely with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through experience and social interaction (Susanto, 2014; Utomo, 2011). Learning becomes more effective when students actively discuss ideas and work together, while teachers provide direction, scaffolding, and support as facilitators (Salsabila & Muqowim, 2024; Wahab & Rosnawati, 2011). In History learning, PJBL supports students' understanding of nationalism by engaging them in the exploration of historical events, group discussions, and reflection on the values of national struggle. Through project-

based investigations of historical figures, events, and their underlying values, students not only comprehend historical chronology but also internalize values of nationalism, unity, and the spirit of struggle. As a result, students' understanding of nationalism becomes deeper and more contextual.

Previous studies also support the effectiveness of PJBL in History education. Kamaliyah and Alrianingrum (2022) found that PJBL improves students' understanding of historical values, while Irwanto, Hudaidah, and Izuddin (2021) emphasized the importance of active and collaborative student engagement in the learning process. Similarly, Adela, Ahyani, and Nindiati (2021) reported that systematic project-based activities make learning more meaningful than conventional lecture methods. Through cooperation, communication, and reflection, PJBL enables students to appreciate and apply the values of nationalism in everyday life, rather than merely memorizing historical facts. PJBL enhances student participation, collaboration, and understanding while fostering the internalization of nationalism values in History learning. By creating an active, meaningful, and contextual learning environment, PJBL is highly suitable as an alternative instructional model for History education, particularly in strengthening students' understanding of nationalism.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study conducted at an Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang, the application of the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model in Grade XI History learning proved to be more effective than conventional instructional methods in improving students' understanding of nationalism. The experimental class that implemented PJBL showed an increase in the average posttest score to 79.0, with 65% of students achieving a score of ≥ 75 . In contrast, the control class achieved an average posttest score of 62.7, with only 10% of students reaching the same level of achievement. Furthermore, the N-Gain analysis indicated that the improvement in

students' understanding in the experimental class was more evenly distributed, with an average N-Gain score of 0.4424, compared to 0.3472 in the control class. These findings demonstrate that PJBL contributes more effectively to enhancing students' understanding of nationalism than conventional learning approaches. This study confirms that the Project-Based Learning model has strong potential to be further developed and implemented as an effective instructional strategy in History education, particularly in fostering students' understanding of nationalism through active, meaningful, and contextual learning experiences.

Declaration by Authors

Acknowledgement: None

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: No conflicts of interest declared.

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- How to cite this article: Naia Sophianti, Arif Purnomo. The effectiveness of the project-based learning model in Indonesian colonial resistance learning on students' understanding of Indonesian Nationalism at Islamic High School Al-Asror Semarang. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2026; 13(2): 70-80. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260208>
