Design and development of a digital game to support civics education for fourth-grade students

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Article info	Abstract
	Civics education on the nation's struggle is often considered less interesting to elementary school students. Therefore, this study aims to develop Digital Educational Games as Civics Education learning media based on the History of the Nation's Struggle material for Class IV Elementary School students, with validity and effectiveness. This research uses a research and development model based on the Borg & Gall model, comprising nine stages from needs analysis to field trials. Validation was conducted by media, material, and linguistics experts, with an average validity of 92%, indicating that this media is highly valid for use. The field trial involving 29 students implied that this digital educational game was effective, with an average learning outcome of 95.66 and an effectiveness rate of 90%. Thus, this digital educational game proved to be valid and effective.

1. Introduction

Civics Education (CE) plays a pivotal role in developing students' character and fostering a sense of nationalism from an early age (Annisa et al., 2024; Tamba & Ramadan, 2025). One of the core topics in CE instruction at the elementary school level is the history of national struggle. This subject aims to cultivate students' nationalism, patriotism, and the spirit of struggle, as exemplified during the Indonesian independence era in 1945 (Megafajari et al., 2023). Learning about the history of national struggle helps shape students' character and identity. Furthermore, this subject introduces students to significant events in the nation's journey toward independence and its preservation (Kusnadi & Semarang, 2022). Firdaus (2023) emphasised that a deep understanding of historical narratives can awaken patriotism, love for the homeland, and appreciation for the sacrifices made by national heroes (Firdaus, 2023).

In Indonesia, game-based learning in Civics Education has mostly been applied at the elementary level, focusing primarily on knowledge acquisition (Tampubolon et al., 2025). In practice, teaching the history of the national struggle continues to face several challenges. Traditional methods, such as lectures and textbook reading, often fail to engage students (Asmadi et al., 2024), making them passive recipients of information with minimal active involvement in the learning process. Teachers play a central role not only in conveying historical facts but also in instilling the values embedded in those events (Munandar & Gegrafi, 2024). However, the fact-heavy nature of history materials can be difficult for elementary students to grasp due to their limited cognitive development (Ilhami, 2022). Observations in Grade IV at SDN Merjosari 01 confirmed these challenges, showing low student interest, limited participation, and poor comprehension of values such as nationalism, patriotism, and unity. The persistence of conventional, teacher-centred approaches led to reduced motivation and difficulty in recalling historical events or recognising key figures. These findings highlight the need for innovative, interactive learning tools aligned with technological advancements, such as digital educational games, to make Civics Education more engaging and effective.

In line with technological advancements, the field of education must innovate to develop efficient and engaging learning methods. One promising solution is integrating digital educational games into instructional media. This type of media combines academic content with interactive elements, thereby increasing students' enthusiasm for learning and motivating them to engage actively with the subject matter. Engaging learning experiences can stimulate cognitive processes, leading to more effective information retention (Kurniawan & Risnani, 2021). Several studies have shown that the use of games in learning enhances student engagement, strengthens memory retention, and improves conceptual understanding (Ferlina & Fratiwi, 2024). Digital media can also be used as a tool for evaluating student learning (Habib Maulana et al., 2025).

Moreover, digital educational games can be tailored to meet students' learning needs in terms of difficulty level, visual design, and interactive features that support a more appealing understanding of the material (Apriyantini et al., 2024). With elements such as animations, interactive quizzes, and simulations of historical events presented in game formats, students do not merely read and memorise information; they also engage in a more exploratory learning process. This contributes to deeper conceptual understanding and more effective internalisation of national values.

In response to the issues described above, this study focuses on developing a digital educational game as a learning tool for the CE subject—specifically, the history of the national struggle—targeting Grade IV elementary students. The game development process adopts the Borg & Gall model. Through this development, the study aims to offer a more engaging and interactive learning method tailored to students' needs and characteristics. Additionally, this research evaluates the validity and effectiveness of the digital educational game and its impact on students' learning motivation. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for the development of innovative learning tools that are valid, effective, and applicable within the scope of elementary education, particularly in the CE domain.

2. Method

The present study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach, adopting the Borg and Gall development model. This model was selected for its systematic framework in producing and refining educational products that meet specific instructional needs. As outlined by Borg and Gall in Hakim, 2020, the primary aim of developmental research is to create educational products that are both valid and effective through a structured series of stages. Anwar (2017) describes the R&D process as comprising nine key stages: (1) preliminary research and data collection, (2) planning, (3) development of the initial product draft, (4) initial product testing, (5) product revision, (6) small-group

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testing, (7) further product revision, (8) field testing, and (9) final product refinement (Anwar, 2017). The Borg and Gall model was considered appropriate for this study, as it facilitates the development of a digital educational game tailored to the needs of Civics Education instruction, specifically on the History of the National Struggle for fourth-grade elementary students.

The research was conducted at SDN Merjosari 01, targeting a fourth-grade class with 29 students participating as subjects. Data collection instruments included observation sheets, questionnaires, and student achievement tests.

The validity of the developed media was assessed through expert evaluations, involving subject matter experts, media design experts, and language experts. The scores from these assessments were then converted into validity categories using a predetermined percentage scale (Table 1). The formula used to calculate the validity percentage was as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \, x \, 100\%$$

Where: P = Percentage, F = Score obtained, and N = Maximum possible score

Table 1. Media validity categories

Percentages	Categories
81% < P ≤ 100%	Very valid
61% < P ≤ 80%	Valid
41% < P ≤ 60%	Moderately valid
21% < P ≤ 40%	Less valid
P ≤ 20%	Not valid

Source: (J. Akbar et al., 2021)

The nine stages of the Borg & Gall model are adapted to suit classroom constraints in the present study. The initial product testing and small-group trial stages were merged, while the dissemination stage was omitted due to limited time and resources. The remaining steps were implemented sequentially to ensure a systematic product development process.

The second phase of data analysis involved evaluating the questionnaires administered to teachers and students, as well as the student learning outcomes, to assess their responses to the developed instructional media. The questionnaire scores were interpreted to determine the effectiveness of the media (Table 2), while student achievement data served as a benchmark for evaluating learning goal attainment. Media effectiveness was gauged based on how well the learning objectives were achieved (S. Akbar, 2017), using the following formula:

$$\text{Effectiveness Percentage} = \frac{Score\ obtained}{Maximum\ score} \, x \, 100\%$$

Table 2. Media effectiveness categories

Percentages	Categories
81% < P ≤ 100%	Very effective
61% < P ≤ 80%	Effective
41% < P ≤ 60%	Fair
21% < P ≤ 40%	Less effective
P ≤ 20%	Not effective

Source: (J. Akbar et al., 2021)

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3.   Results

3.1 Product development

This study focused on developing a digital educational game as an instructional medium for Civics Education (*Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*), specifically targeting the topic of 'The History of the National Struggle' for fourth-grade students at SDN Merjosari 01. The development process adopted the Borg and Gall model, which was adapted to suit the research context.

The initial phase involved classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students to identify key learning challenges. The findings revealed that students demonstrated low engagement and motivation in history, largely because of conventional methods such as lectures and textbook reading. Based on these findings, the need for an innovative, game-based learning medium became evident.

During the design and development stages, visual and functional prototypes were created, including the layout, interface, and navigation paths of the digital game. Educational content related to Indonesia's national struggle was integrated into the game through quizzes, short narratives, and contextual challenges, creating an interactive learning experience. The game was developed in collaboration with the PIJI media team and published on the Play Store under the title **"***Tebak Tokoh Orang Indonesia – UNITRI.***"** To illustrate the interface and basic design of the developed product, the appearance of the digital educational game is presented in Figure 1**.** This figure demonstrates the game's main interface, including the menu and a gameplay example.

Figure 1. Interface of the "*tebak tokoh orang Indonesia*" digital educational game

The game is designed to be intuitive for students. After selecting the title and pressing *Mulai Main*, players are guided by a brief instruction page and proceed to the quiz. The game features five levels of increasing difficulty. In each level, students guess the names of Indonesian historical figures by selecting the correct letters. Correct answers are followed by short descriptions of the statistics and a display of scores, encouraging players to continue to higher levels. A complete version of the user guide is provided in Appendix A.

The validity of the developed media was assessed by three experts: media design, content, and language experts. The results of the validation test are summarised in Figure 2, which indicates that all expert evaluations yielded high scores, confirming that the media was categorised as very valid for classroom use.
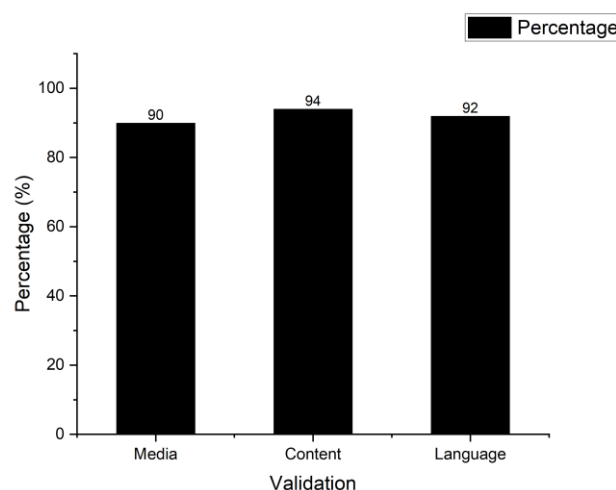
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Figure 2. Validation test results

3.2 Product trial and revision results

After the development stage, the game underwent a small-group trial involving five fourth-grade students. The purpose of this trial was to obtain preliminary feedback regarding usability and comprehension. The results showed that students were more enthusiastic and found it easier to understand the material on the nation's struggle, with an average learning outcome of 87.77%, exceeding the Minimum Passing Criteria (KKM). The results of this stage are summarised in Table 3, which presents the individual learning outcomes of the five students who participated in the small-group test.

Table 3. Learning outcomes of the small group trial

Subjects	Small Group Trial	Scores (%)
Teacher	Class IV Teacher	95.00
Student 1		87.25
Student 2		85.00
Student 3		83.46
Student 4		85.75
Student 5		90.15
Total		526.61
Average		87.77

The small-group trial implied that students were more enthusiastic and found it easier to understand the material on the nation's struggle. Feedback from students and the teacher highlighted several areas for improvement, including clarity of instruction, colour contrast, and variety of questions. Accordingly, revisions were made to enhance the game's instructional quality and visual comfort. The revised version featured clearer on-screen guidance, adjusted colour schemes for better readability, and a more diverse set of questions aligned with students' comprehension levels.

Following these revisions, a field trial was conducted involving 29 fourth-grade students to evaluate the effectiveness of the revised product. The results of the field trial are presented in Figure 3, which illustrates the effectiveness of the digital educational game on student learning outcomes.
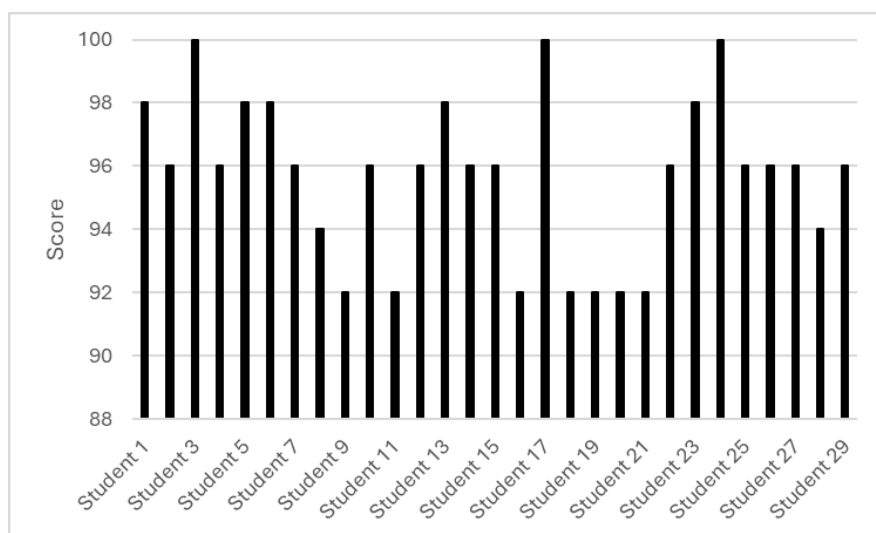
Figure 3. Effectiveness of learning outcomes in the field trial

As shown in Figure 3, all participants achieve scores above the KKM, with an average learning score of 95.66% and an effectiveness rate of 90%, placing the media in the "very effective" category. These results demonstrate that the digital educational game successfully enhances students' motivation and understanding of Civics Education material, particularly in learning about Indonesia's national struggle.

3.3 Final product

After completing the revision process, the digital educational game was finalised and declared ready for classroom implementation. The final version of **"*Tebak Tokoh Orang Indonesia*"** proved to be both valid and effective as a learning medium. It provides an engaging, interactive platform that supports Civics Education learning by integrating historical content with game-based activities, thereby improving students' enthusiasm, participation, and conceptual understanding (Tabel 4).

Tabel 4. Steps for using the digital educational game media
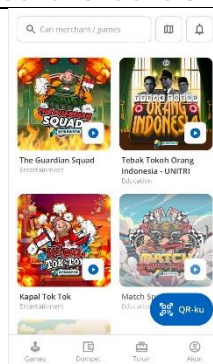
Illustrations and Steps
Open the PIJI application after downloading it, then search for and select the game entitled "*Tebak Tokoh Orang Indonesia*".

Illustrations and Steps

Once the game details appear, click "*Mainkan*" to begin.

Press the "*Mulai Main*" button to initiate the gameplay.

An instruction page appears explaining how to play the game; after reading and understanding the instructions, click "*Mulai Main*".

Select Level 1 to begin the educational game.

Illustrations and Steps

A question appears; after reading and understanding the question, press "*ayo main*".

Guess the name of the historical figure by spelling the correct letters in the provided space.

If the answer is correct, a description of the historical figure appears.

After answering all questions, the final score is displayed. If all answers are correct, the player can proceed to the next levels, from Level 2 up to Level 5.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to analyse the validity and effectiveness of a digital educational game as a learning medium for Civics Education (PKn) on the topic of the nation's struggle history for fourth-grade elementary students. The validation results obtained from media, content, and language experts showed an average score of 92%, indicating that the product was in the very valid category. This finding confirms that the developed media fulfilled essential standards of educational feasibility in terms of content, appearance, and language (Argarini & Sulistyorini, 2018; Astuti et al., 2021).

Beyond its validity, the game proved highly effective in improving learning outcomes. In the field trial involving 29 students, all achieved mastery, with an average score of 95.66% and an effectiveness rate of 90%. This indicates that the *Tebak Tokoh Orang Indonesia* game substantially enhanced comprehension of the national struggle. As suggested by Akbar et al. (2021) and Irfan et al. (2019), learning media are considered effective when they enable most students to achieve mastery and actively engage in the learning process.

The improvement in learning performance can be attributed to specific pedagogical mechanisms embedded in the game design. The *"guess the figure"* mechanic fostered curiosity-driven engagement and problem-solving, while visual feedback and progressive scoring provided immediate reinforcement that sustained motivation. These features align with the principles of game-based learning, which emphasise interaction, feedback, and challenge as core drivers of learning effectiveness (Ferlina & Fratiwi, 2024; Kurniawan & Risnani, 2021). Moreover, the integration of short historical narratives and hero images encouraged affective learning, allowing students to internalise civic values such as nationalism, unity, and patriotism.

These results resonate with a wide range of studies showing that digital educational games increase student motivation, engagement, and conceptual understanding while transforming passive learning into active participation (Fadliyah et al., 2024; Firmansyah, 2024; Hasnimar, 2024; Rahayu & Rukmana, 2022; Sari & Ayundasari, 2024; Syafriafdi et al., 2025). Other scholars similarly emphasise that interactive media strengthen students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills and make Civics Education more appealing through contextualised and visual storytelling (Ainumila & Oktiningrum, 2021; Alifah et al., 2023; Arsiva et al., 2024; Saputri & Putra, 2023; Sukmawati et al., 2025).

Applying the Borg & Gall development model further ensured the systematic design and refinement of the product. This model has been widely recognised for its structured approach in developing educational media that respond to learners' needs through iterative testing and revision (Alam & Imbar, 2021; Nawali et al., 2024). Applying this model allowed the researchers to produce a valid, effective, and user-centred game tailored to the characteristics of elementary school learners.

Thus, the *Tebak Tokoh Orang Indonesia* digital educational game not only meets the validity and effectiveness criteria but also embodies meaningful innovation in Civics Education. It combines cognitive and affective engagement, integrates national character education, and presents history in an enjoyable, interactive format that aligns with current pedagogical standards.

However, several limitations must be noted. The study was conducted at a single school with a relatively small sample, which might limit the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, this study did not assess long-term retention or behavioural changes related to civic values. Future studies should include a broader participant base and adopt longitudinal designs to evaluate how well students retain knowledge and internalise civic values over time.

5. Conclusion and implications

The present study demonstrates that the *Tebak Tokoh Orang Indonesia* digital educational game, developed using the Borg and Gall model, is valid (92%) and highly effective (95.66%) in improving fourth-grade students' comprehension and motivation in Civics Education learning. Practically, this

media offers teachers an innovative and interactive tool to make history and civics lessons more engaging, fostering active participation and independent learning. Theoretically, the findings strengthen the concept of game-based learning as a pedagogical approach that combines cognitive engagement with value internalisation, particularly in promoting nationalism and character education among young learners. This digital educational game thus represents a meaningful contribution to integrating technology and civic values in elementary education.

Credit authorship contribution statement

The **first author** is responsible for methodology development, formal analysis, data curation, and conceptualisation, and led the writing of the original draft of the manuscript. The **second author** contributes to resource provision, project administration, and methodological support. The **last author** contributes to funding acquisition, formal analysis, and data curation. **All authors** participated in the critical revision of the manuscript and approved the final version for submission.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Ethical declaration

All participants provided informed consent before their involvement in the study. They were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

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