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Diagnostic Profiles of Social Literacy Civic Literacy and Decision Making among Grade Five Elementary School Students

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Abstract. *Diagnostic assessment is needed to identify elementary students' learning needs in greater detail than total scores alone. This study describes social literacy, civic literacy, and decision-making profiles and identifies differences between indicators among fifth-grade elementary students. A descriptive quantitative approach with an exploratory diagnostic design involved 15 students at SDN 23 Batara, Palopo, Indonesia. The instrument contained 12 constructed-response questions based on four contextual stimuli: bullying, mutual cooperation, cultural diversity, and the use of shared facilities. Responses were scored using an analytical rubric ranging from 0 to 3 for each response component. Scores were analyzed descriptively at construct and indicator levels. Mean percentages of maximum possible scores were 28.06% for social literacy, 32.50% for civic literacy, and 26.11% for decision making. Social problem identification exceeded social perspective interpretation by 31.11 percentage points. Understanding shared rules and values exceeded understanding rights and responsibilities by 17.78 percentage points. Selecting actions and providing reasons exceeded identifying decision problems and evaluating consequences by 13.33 and 12.22 percentage points, respectively. Indicator profiles provide an initial basis for prioritizing instructional support. Findings are limited to the participants and tasks used, and interpretation should consider the limitations of the measurement evidence.*

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Introduction

Elementary education plays an important role in developing students' understanding of social life and their ability to evaluate actions in social situations. In school environments, students encounter issues such as bullying, the distribution of responsibilities, cultural differences, and the use of shared facilities. Addressing these situations requires students to identify problems, understand the people involved, consider rights and responsibilities, and explain the reasons underlying their decisions. Therefore, social and civic education should provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge when interpreting problems related to their everyday experiences. Research has highlighted the relevance of students' experiences and identities in fifth-grade social studies and demonstrated how local issues can help elementary students connect personal experiences with collective interests (Falkner & Payne, 2021; Toledo & Enright, 2022).

Research on civic education emphasizes the importance of learning experiences that enable students to apply knowledge in shared social contexts. Campbell (2019) reviewed the development of evidence concerning civic education, while Fitzgerald et al. (2021) identified the need for K–12 research that pays attention to instructional implementation and learning outcomes. Reasoning, decision-making skills, and discussions of rights and responsibilities have also been positioned as important components of civic education (White et al., 2023). In elementary education, these components can be addressed through developmentally appropriate issues, including the distribution of opportunities, conflicts among peers, and responsibilities toward the school environment.

Addressing these issues involves social literacy, civic literacy, and decision-making skills. In this study, social literacy comprises the abilities to identify information and problems, explain cause-and-effect relationships, interpret different perspectives, and apply social understanding. Civic literacy refers to the application of concepts related to rights, responsibilities, rules, participation, accountability, and fairness in concrete situations. Decision-making skills include identifying decision problems, generating alternatives, evaluating consequences, and selecting actions supported by relevant reasons. Although these domains have distinct emphases, they may operate together when students explain how a particular problem should be resolved. In this study, observation is restricted to students' understanding and reasoning as expressed in written responses. Perspective-taking requires students to recognize that the same event may be interpreted differently by the people involved. Research involving 129 fifth-grade students examined the relationship between knowledge justification in collaborative argumentation and the development of social perspectives (Kim et al., 2024). Similarly, fifth-grade students who participated in collaborative social reasoning discussions generated more justified perspectives than students in a comparison group (Wen et al., 2023). These findings highlight the importance of examining the reasons underlying students' perspectives rather than merely identifying the individuals involved in a problem (Kim et al., 2024; Wen et al., 2023).

Social understanding should also be connected with civic reasoning. Civic literacy among upper-elementary students extends beyond factual knowledge, requiring students to apply their understanding in relevant contexts (Yao et al., 2022). Practical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills also contribute to civic engagement (Hillygus & Holbein, 2023). In written assessments, particular attention should therefore be given to students' ability to use civic concepts to explain specific situations. Merely mentioning a rule does not necessarily demonstrate an understanding of the rights, responsibilities, and interests of the people involved. Decision-making skills connect social understanding with the evaluation of alternative actions. Previous research has examined the formation of a decision space, the selection of strategies, and reflection on the decision-making process (Fang et al., 2019). Classroom-based research has also described decision components and proficiencies that can be observed in instructional practice (Dauer et al., 2025). These frameworks suggest that decision-making assessments should examine the information considered, alternatives generated, criteria applied, and consequences anticipated. However, their application to everyday school social issues requires adaptation because the tasks in the present study do not exclusively concern socioscientific problems. Research using scenarios involving fifth- and sixth-grade students has examined perspectives and decisions concerning forests and land use, providing a basis for investigating decision justifications through contextual situations while recognizing that different task contexts are not necessarily equivalent (Kim et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, research has reported that elementary students demonstrate social literacy through interactions and group work, although critical social understanding and reflective reasoning may require further development (Nisa et al., 2025). Other research has discussed challenges in elementary social studies education and potential improvements to instructional practice (Saidah & Damariswara, 2024). These studies provide a contextual foundation for examining students' capabilities through tasks based on familiar social situations. Nevertheless, their findings do not establish the specific conditions of students at the school investigated in the present study. An assessment of the target students is therefore necessary to identify their demonstrated capabilities and learning needs.

Diagnostic assessment can be understood as a process of mapping students' performance to identify their learning needs. Assessment should be connected with models of learning and instructional adjustments to support students' development (Shepard, 2019). Effective assessment practices also require assessment literacy, data literacy, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher collaboration (Schildkamp et al., 2020). Research syntheses have examined the benefits of formative assessment in K–12 education (Lee et al., 2020; Sortwell et al., 2024). However, assessment does not automatically become formative merely because it produces information about student performance. In the present study, diagnosis serves as an initial mapping process, and its educational value depends on subsequent instructional support, feedback, and evaluation of progress.

Overall scores may conceal differences in performance across individual indicators. Two students who obtain the same total score may demonstrate different capability profiles, meaning that their learning needs cannot be identified adequately through total scores alone. Indicator-level analysis should therefore account for individual variation rather than relying exclusively on class averages. For constructed-response assessments, interpretation also requires a clear alignment among questions, student responses, and scoring criteria. The reliability and validity of rubrics are important considerations in assessment, while explicit rubric design supports transparent and replicable reporting (Dawson, 2017; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

Previous research provides a foundation for examining the quality of students' social and civic responses through discussions, written tasks, and contextual scenarios. Nevertheless, the existing evidence does not directly address the diagnostic needs of the particular class investigated in this study. A systematic mapping is needed to connect social literacy, the application of civic concepts, and decision-making skills through a shared set of assessment tasks. Accordingly, this study uses bullying, mutual cooperation, cultural diversity, and shared facilities to present problems related to students' everyday experiences. The research gap concerns the need for diagnostic information that can be interpreted across these three domains within a specific classroom context, rather than an absence of research on each domain individually. Intervention studies investigate the potential development of capabilities following instruction, whereas diagnostic studies describe the performance demonstrated during assessment. This distinction is important because previous findings can establish the relevance of the indicators but cannot be used to estimate the participants' scores or determine the causes of their difficulties.

The conceptual framework of this study connects contextual problems as prompts for student responses, indicators as the focus of observation, and scores as summaries of demonstrated performance. Information from the three domains is interpreted collectively to identify task components that may require further instructional support.

This integration is analytical rather than causal. The study does not test whether social literacy causes civic literacy or whether either domain determines decision-making ability. Distinguishing conceptual connections from empirical relationships helps maintain alignment between the research objectives and the descriptive research design.

This study aims to describe the achievement profiles of social literacy, civic literacy, and decision-making skills among fifth-grade students at SDN 23 Batara and to identify indicators with relatively higher and lower scores. Its contribution lies in mapping students' learning needs through indicator-level analysis of the three domains within a single assessment context. Interpretation is limited to the participants and tasks examined and takes into account the demands of written responses and the scoring process.

Methods

Research design and context

The study employed a descriptive quantitative approach with an exploratory diagnostic design. The design mapped social literacy, civic literacy, and decision making through contextual tasks. Analysis focused on construct and indicator profiles and differences in task performance. The study was not designed to test treatment effects, establish causal relationships, or develop elementary students' proficiency norms. The study was conducted from August to September 2026 at SDN 23 Batara in Palopo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The school served as the assessment setting for fifth-grade students' performance in addressing social issues related to shared life. Interpretation recognizes that participants' school experiences and social environments form part of the context in which they responded to the tasks.

Participants were 15 fifth-grade students at SDN 23 Batara. Their identities were anonymized using codes S01–S15. All achievement summaries were calculated from these 15 participants' responses. Grade level and school context defined the scope of analysis. Findings were not treated as estimates of the capabilities of all fifth-grade students in Palopo or elementary students more generally. The student was the primary unit of analysis. Response components and indicators constituted repeated measurements of the same participants and were not treated as additional participants. The study's scope was exploratory diagnosis of the assessed group. Emphasized the relationship between sample size, the information sought, and the intended inference (Lakens, 2022). Accordingly, the study prioritized performance description and instructional priorities; the sample size was not used to support validation of the instrument's structure or population generalization.

Instrument and contextual tasks

The instrument comprised 12 constructed-response questions based on four stimuli: bullying and peer relationships, mutual cooperation and responsibility for the school environment, cultural diversity, and the use of shared facilities. These contexts were selected because they relate to elementary students' social lives. The test provided evidence of understanding and written reasoning. Scores were not directly treated as measures of actual social behavior or all dimensions of civic literacy.

Each of the three constructs was operationalized through four indicators. Social literacy included problem identification, cause-and-effect relationships, perspectives, and the application of understanding. Civic literacy included rights and responsibilities,

shared rules and values, participation, and judgments of fairness. Decision making included decision-problem identification, alternatives, consequences, and choice justification. Perspective-taking and decision-making frameworks informed this operational scope without implying that the instrument was a validated adaptation of either study (Kim et al., 2024; Fang et al., 2019),.

Constructs and indicator mapping

Table 1. Assessment Constructs and Indicators

Construct	Code	Indicator
Social literacy	LS1	Identifying social information and problems
	LS2	Explaining social cause-and-effect relationships
	LS3	Interpreting social perspectives
	LS4	Applying social understanding
Civic literacy	LK1	Understanding rights and responsibilities
	LK2	Understanding shared rules, norms, and values
	LK3	Understanding participation and shared responsibility
	LK4	Evaluating fairness and responsibility
Decision making	PK1	Identifying decision problems
	PK2	Generating and comparing alternatives
	PK3	Evaluating consequences
	PK4	Selecting and justifying decisions

Each indicator was assessed through two response components, each with a maximum score of 3. Consequently, the maximum score was 6 per indicator and 24 per construct. The complete assessment contained 24 scoring components and a maximum score of 72 per student. Response components were the scoring units, whereas the 12 questions were the test's question units; this distinction was maintained in score calculation. Indicator profiles were obtained by aggregating the two component scores for each indicator.

Rubric and scoring

Each response component was scored using an analytical rubric ranging from 0 to 3. Component scores were summed to obtain indicator scores, and the four indicator scores were summed to obtain each construct score. The rubric focused assessment on evidence relevant to each indicator in students' written responses. Informed the discussion of explicit criteria and traceable scoring. Numerical values were treated as task-performance scores (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007 ; Dawson, 2017). They were not used to classify proficiency as low, moderate, or high because category thresholds were not established in this study. Blank responses received a score of 0 and remained in the achievement denominator. Reported means therefore described overall assessment performance, including unanswered components. A zero score was not automatically interpreted as an absence of capability; blank responses and completed responses receiving zero may have different causes. The implications of this rule are addressed in the limitations.

Administration and score checking

Data were collected through the constructed-response test based on four contextual stimuli. Participants' answers were scored at the question level and subsequently checked through rescoring at the subindicator level. Scores following this check were used as the final data. Processing involved response scoring, subindicator score checking, aggregation into indicator and construct scores, conversion into percentages of maximum possible scores, and preparation of descriptive profiles. Rescoring was understood as a score-

checking procedure and was not equated with testing agreement between independent raters.

Score calculation and data analysis

Analysis used means, standard deviations, minima, and maxima at construct and indicator levels. Percentages represented scores relative to the maximum possible score. Indicator scores of 0–6 were converted to 0–100%, while construct scores of 0–24 were converted using a denominator of 24. This conversion standardized reporting units without establishing equal difficulty across indicators. Mean differences were calculated within the same construct and expressed in percentage points. Comparisons were selected after observing the profiles and were therefore exploratory.

The label social perspective gap summarizes the difference between LS1 and LS3; civic conceptualization gap summarizes the difference between LK2 and LK1; and decision-reasoning gap summarizes the differences between PK4 and PK1 and PK3. These labels were assigned after the achievement profiles were established. They organize interpretation without introducing additional variables, defining participant subgroups, or producing individual diagnostic categories. Internal consistency was reported exploratorily using Cronbach's alpha for each construct. Coefficients were treated as preliminary information in view of the number of participants, score variation, and indicator coverage. Alpha was not used as the sole evidence of measurement validity or unidimensionality (Sijtsma, 2009). Descriptive profiles remained the primary analysis. Significance tests were not used to establish indicator differences, and correlations between constructs were not tested as a primary objective.

Research ethics

This study was conducted at SDN 23 Batara, Palopo, a partner school of Universitas Muhammadiyah Palopo in implementing the three pillars of higher education (Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi): education, research, and community service. Data collection was carried out alongside the university's Tridharma activities at the school. Participants' identities were anonymized using codes S01–S15, and findings were reported in aggregate without students' names or other identifying information to protect their privacy.

Results and Discussion

Hasil Penelitian

Achievement profiles across the three constructs

Assessment of the 15 fifth-grade students revealed variation in social literacy, civic literacy, and decision making. Mean percentages of maximum possible scores ranged from 26.11% to 32.50%. Civic literacy had the highest mean, followed by social literacy and decision making. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the three constructs

Construct	Mean /24	Mean (%)	SD (%)	Min. (%)	Max. (%)
Social literacy	6.73	28.06	12.55	8.33	58.33
Civic literacy	7.80	32.50	10.70	16.67	58.33
Decision making	6.27	26.11	7.95	8.33	37.50

The mean civic literacy score was 7.80, compared with 6.73 for social literacy and 6.27 for decision making. Civic literacy exceeded social literacy by 4.44 percentage points

and decision making by 6.39 percentage points. These comparisons are descriptive because the comparability of measurement demands across constructs has not been established. Social literacy had the largest standard deviation, at 12.55 percentage points, and scores ranged from 8.33% to 58.33%. Decision making had a standard deviation of 7.95 percentage points and a maximum score of 37.50%. Ranges and standard deviations indicate variation among participants. They do not identify which students had relatively higher or lower scores because individual profiles are not presented.

Relationship between indicator and construct scores

Aggregated indicator scores correspond to construct scores because each construct contains four indicators with the same maximum possible score. The mean percentage across the four indicators forms the construct's mean percentage. For social literacy, the indicator percentages of 43.33%, 31.11%, 12.22%, and 25.56% produce a construct mean of 28.06%. The same aggregation yields 32.50% for civic literacy and 26.11% for decision making, allowing for rounding. This relationship shows that a total score can combine indicators with different achievement levels. In social literacy, the relatively higher LS1 score occurred alongside a lower LS3 score. In decision making, PK4 exceeded the other three indicators. Total-score interpretation was therefore supplemented with indicator profiles to locate performance differences.

Indicator achievement profiles

Table 3. Student achievement at the indicator level

Code	Indicator	Mean /6	Score SD	Achievement
LS1	Identifying social information and problems	2.60	1.30	43.33 %
LS2	Explaining social cause-and-effect relationships	1.87	0.52	31.11 %
LS3	Interpreting social perspectives	0.73	1.03	12.22 %
LS4	Applying social understanding	1.53	0.92	25.56 %
LK1	Understanding rights and responsibilities	1.33	0.49	22.22 %
LK2	Understanding shared rules, norms, and values	2.40	1.06	40.00 %
LK3	Understanding participation and shared responsibility	2.00	1.07	33.33 %
LK4	Evaluating fairness and responsibility	2.07	0.88	34.44%
PK1	Identifying decision problems	1.27	0.59	21.11 %
PK2	Generating and comparing alternatives	1.60	0.83	26.67%
PK3	Evaluating consequences	1.33	0.62	22.22 %
PK4	Selecting and justifying decisions	2.07	0.80	34.44 v

In social literacy, LS1 had the highest achievement at 43.33%, followed by LS2 at 31.11% and LS4 at 25.56%. LS3 reached 12.22%. On these tasks, identifying social information and problems received higher scores than interpreting perspectives. LS3 had a standard deviation of 1.03 around a mean of 0.73; participant responses should not be assumed to be uniform on the basis of the mean alone. In civic literacy, LK2 reached 40.00%, followed by LK4 at 34.44% and LK3 at 33.33%. LK1 had the lowest achievement at 22.22%. The proximity of LK3 and LK4 indicates a small mean difference. Understanding shared rules and values received higher scores than understanding rights and responsibilities.

In decision making, PK4 reached 34.44% and PK2 reached 26.67%. PK1 and PK3 reached 21.11% and 22.22%, respectively. Selecting an action and providing reasons received higher scores than identifying the decision problem and evaluating consequences. Aggregated data do not establish whether this pattern occurred among all students or only some of them. Indicator achievement ranged from 12.22% to 43.33%. No indicator mean exceeded half of its maximum possible score. This finding describes the

distance between observed performance and the instrument's maximum score, rather than a formal mastery threshold. Without an established proficiency standard, results cannot be interpreted as the percentage of students achieving mastery or the prevalence of inability. Indicators with relatively higher scores may still warrant further development. Within-construct achievement ranges also differed. The difference between the highest and lowest indicators was 31.11 percentage points for social literacy, 17.78 for civic literacy, and 13.33 for decision making. These values describe heterogeneity within each domain's indicator profile. The smaller range for decision making does not demonstrate better measurement consistency, because similarity of means and consistency of relationships between scores represent different statistical information.

Differences between indicators

Descriptive comparisons were conducted between selected indicators with relatively higher and lower scores within each construct. Comparisons were selected after observing the profiles and were therefore exploratory. Differences were calculated from unrounded values.

Table 4. Mean achievement differences between indicators

Construct	Comparison	Score difference /6	Difference in percentage points
Social literacy	LS1 − LS3	1.87	31.11
Civic literacy	LK2 − LK1	1.07	17.78
Decision making	PK4 − PK1	0.80	13.33
Decision making	PK4 − PK3	0.73	12.22

The largest difference was between LS1 and LS3, at 31.11 percentage points. LK2 exceeded LK1 by 17.78 percentage points. PK4 exceeded PK1 by 13.33 percentage points and PK3 by 12.22 percentage points. These differences describe average task performance and do not establish the number of students exhibiting each pattern. The LS1–LS3 pattern is summarized as a social perspective gap, referring to the difference between problem identification and social perspective interpretation. The LK2–LK1 pattern is summarized as a civic conceptualization gap, referring to the difference between understanding shared rules or values and understanding rights and responsibilities. The comparisons of PK4 with PK1 and PK3 are summarized as a decision-reasoning gap. These are interpretive labels rather than separate constructs or individual diagnoses with validated score thresholds. Equal maximum scores do not guarantee equivalent question demands or difficulty. The patterns are therefore understood as performance differences on the instrument used. Conclusions about individual reasoning processes require examination of original responses and the rubric.

Internal consistency of scores

Exploratory analysis yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .783 for social literacy, .480 for civic literacy, and .326 for decision making. The social literacy coefficient exceeded those of the other constructs. These values provide preliminary information from 15 participants. Their implications for total-score use are discussed alongside measurement limitations.

Discussion

Indicator profiles as a basis for diagnosis

Differences between indicators provide more detailed information than total scores. The social literacy mean alone does not reveal that problem identification exceeded perspective interpretation. The decision-making mean likewise does not explain the

difference between selecting actions and evaluating consequences. The study's diagnostic contribution lies in mapping performance components requiring further examination and support. This information remains evidence from the tasks administered. Using the profiles is consistent with, who emphasized connections between assessment, learning processes, and instructional adjustment (Shepard, 2019). Identified assessment and data literacy as prerequisites for using findings (Schildkamp et al., 2020). Class averages can establish shared priorities for examination but are insufficient for determining each student's needs. Individual diagnosis requires each participant's responses and scores.

A diagnostic profile identifies where performance differs, while explaining why it differs requires additional evidence. This distinction supports proportionate interpretation. The large LS1–LS3 difference may justify prioritizing examination of social perspectives, but does not establish that problem-identification practice should cease. Relatively higher achievement is meaningful only in comparison with other indicators in the same assessment. Instructional priorities should consider the importance of the competence, relationships between components, and variation in students' needs. Assessing three domains together also has interpretive implications. Shared contexts may help students draw on the same situational understanding across several questions. However, performance may also be influenced by comprehension of the common stimulus. The profile therefore does not establish that the three constructs are entirely separate or identical. The instrument provides an operational reading of related social tasks while retaining explicit measurement limitations.

Problem identification and social perspective interpretation

The 31.11-percentage-point difference between LS1 and LS3 indicates that students achieved higher scores in recognizing problems than in explaining the perspectives of different individuals. This difference represents a gap in performance on the social perspective indicators. Problem identification may rely on explicit information provided in the stimulus, whereas perspective interpretation may require students to connect information with the reasons, feelings, and interests of different individuals. These differences in cognitive demands provide a basis for identifying areas that warrant further investigation but do not establish the causes of the observed scores.

Research has demonstrated a relationship between knowledge justification in collaborative argumentation and perspective-taking among fifth-grade students (Kim et al., 2024). Collaborative social reasoning discussions have also been found to benefit students' ability to formulate justified perspectives (Wen et al., 2023). Both studies highlight the importance of examining the quality of students' reasoning rather than merely counting the number of individuals mentioned in their responses (Kim et al., 2024; Wen et al., 2023). Furthermore, intervention research has provided evidence concerning perspective-taking and social relationships in school settings (Alan et al., 2021). However, the written scores obtained in the present study cannot be directly interpreted as evidence of participants' prosocial behavior. Lower LS3 scores may reflect several possibilities, including unclear questions, insufficient cues about whose perspectives should be considered, or difficulties expressing ideas in writing. If problem-identification questions provide more explicit cues than perspective-interpretation questions, some of the observed difference may also be associated with task structure. Therefore, the assessment questions, scoring rubrics, and students' responses should be examined before the observed pattern is used to explain specific learning difficulties.

Examined civic perspectives through the work and discussions of second-grade students, demonstrating variation in students' understanding of civic issues (Toledo, 2019). This approach illustrates the value of examining actual student responses to explain differences in achievement. Nevertheless, differences in students' ages and assessment formats limit direct numerical comparisons with the fifth-grade students in the present study. Accordingly, the interpretation of the social perspective gap is restricted to differences in assessment performance and does not establish the specific reasoning processes employed by individual students.

Rules and the application of rights and responsibilities

The 17.78-percentage-point difference between LK2 and LK1 indicates that students achieved higher scores in explaining shared rules and values than in applying the concepts of rights and responsibilities to explain the positions of individuals involved in a problem. This pattern suggests that articulating general rules and values may be less demanding than applying civic concepts to specific social situations. However, this interpretation requires support from students' actual responses. The scores alone do not establish whether the difficulties involve understanding terminology, identifying individuals whose rights are affected, or connecting rights with corresponding responsibilities. Civic literacy extends beyond factual knowledge and requires students to apply their understanding in relevant contexts (Yao et al., 2022). Similarly, civic engagement involves skills that enable individuals to use their knowledge in shared social life (Hillygus & Holbein, 2023). In the present study, the findings concern students' demonstrated understanding and written reasoning rather than their actual civic behavior. Therefore, a higher LK2 score does not establish that students consistently follow rules, while a lower LK1 score does not demonstrate that they disregard the rights of others.

Local issues can provide opportunities for students to connect personal experiences with broader public interests (Toledo & Enright, 2022). In the present study, shared facilities, mutual cooperation, and peer relationships offer contextual situations for examining these conceptual connections. Nevertheless, the familiarity of a context does not guarantee that all students interpret the terminology and assessment demands in the same way. The observed difference between LK2 and LK1 should therefore be understood as an achievement pattern that requires further explanation through students' responses. This difference is relevant to distinguishing declarative knowledge from the application of concepts in reasoning. Statements about the importance of rules and values can often be expressed in general terms, whereas explanations of rights and responsibilities require students to connect relevant concepts with specific individuals and situations. However, the available data do not establish that this distinction caused the observed score difference. The most defensible interpretation is that the two types of assessment tasks were associated with different levels of demonstrated achievement. Accordingly, instruction should provide opportunities for students to explain and apply the relationships among rules, rights, and responsibilities in concrete social situations without prematurely labeling them as lacking civic understanding.

Action selection and decision considerations

PK4 exceeded PK1 and PK3 by 13.33 and 12.22 percentage points, respectively. These results indicate that students achieved higher scores when stating a decision and providing a justification than when explaining a decision problem or its potential consequences. This difference represents a gap in decision-making performance across

the assessed indicators but does not necessarily mean that students consistently make decisions without adequate consideration. Decision-making involves several components, including the formation of a decision space, strategy selection, and reflection on the decision process (Fang et al., 2019). Therefore, identifying a socially appropriate action is not sufficient to demonstrate that students have compared alternatives or considered their potential consequences (Fang et al., 2019). Research involving fifth- and sixth-grade students has examined perspectives and decision justifications through contextual scenarios, highlighting the importance of considering affected parties and providing reasons for decisions (Kim et al., 2025). Although that research focused on environmental issues rather than everyday school social problems, its emphasis on contextual reasoning provides a relevant basis for interpreting the social decision-making tasks used in the present study (Kim et al., 2025).

Interpreting these differences requires careful examination of the scoring rubric. If PK4 awards high scores for selecting an appropriate action and providing a brief justification, whereas PK3 requires students to explain several detailed consequences, differences in scoring demands may contribute to the observed achievement gap. Similarly, PK1 may require students to distinguish a social problem from a situation that specifically requires a decision. The interpretation of assessment results should therefore consider the alignment between task requirements, students' responses, and the scoring criteria (Dawson, 2017; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). Students' original responses must be examined to determine whether lower scores reflect difficulties understanding the relevant reasoning processes or limitations in expressing their understanding in response to the question format. Relationships among decision-making indicators should be interpreted as analytical components of the assessment framework rather than as a directly observed sequence of cognitive processes (Fang et al., 2019). Written assessments may yield higher scores for final choices even when the reasoning sequence used to reach those choices remains unknown. Because the present study did not record students' thinking processes while they completed the tasks, it cannot establish that students skipped particular stages of decision-making. Instead, the diagnostic interpretation focuses on the considerations that can be assessed through students' written responses. This distinction prevents the observed decision-reasoning gap from being interpreted as evidence of mental processes that were not directly measured.

Measurement quality and score interpretation

Rubric-based assessment requires evidence of assessment quality, while explicit rubric design is essential for transparent and consistent scoring (Dawson, 2017; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). Score checking should be distinguished from the agreement between independent raters because these procedures address different aspects of assessment quality. The lower Cronbach's alpha coefficients for civic literacy and decision-making in the present study warrant further examination of score variation, indicator coverage, and potential measurement problems. Cronbach's alpha should be interpreted cautiously and should not be treated as conclusive evidence of measurement quality (Sijtsma, 2009). Furthermore, indicator-level analysis does not automatically resolve measurement problems, as every score must remain clearly connected to the corresponding assessment objective. Low alpha coefficients cannot be addressed simply by shifting the reporting focus from overall constructs to individual indicators. Different components within the same indicator may involve distinct cognitive demands, and the resulting scores remain dependent on the scoring rubric. Similarly, a higher alpha coefficient for social literacy does not independently establish the validity of the social perspective-taking indicator.

Reliability evidence, content-related evidence, and evidence concerning students' response processes address different aspects of assessment quality and should therefore be considered separately. These limitations support retaining an exploratory interpretation of the findings and avoiding the use of the results as the sole basis for high-stakes decisions about individual students.

Implications for elementary instruction

Indicator profiles provide an initial basis for instructional support. Teachers should examine responses before associating scores with specific difficulties. Means help establish shared priorities, while individual responses are necessary to adjust support. For social perspectives, conflict stories or shared-facility scenarios can be followed by questions about different people's thoughts and the information supporting each explanation. Discussion allows students to compare reasons, consistent with (Kim et al., 2024 & Wen et al., 2023). For civic literacy, students can map affected people, rights, responsibilities, and reasons concerning fairness. Decision-making tasks can request a problem statement, alternatives, consequences, and reasons for a choice. Investigated inquiry, problem solving, and role play among second-grade students (Maier, 2026). This study provides a reference for possible activities, with adaptation for grade five. Their effectiveness among the present participants has not been tested.

Table 5. Diagnostic priorities and instructional follow-up

Priority	Example activity	Observable evidence
Social perspectives	Comparing two people's perspectives in a story or role play	Perspectives explained using situational information
Rights and responsibilities	Mapping people, rights, and responsibilities	Concepts linked to people and actions
Decision problems	Distinguishing events, problems, and decisions	The required decision stated clearly
Consequences	Comparing alternatives and their consequences	Plausible consequences for affected people
Justification	Providing reasons after comparing alternatives	Choices supported by relevant considerations

Demonstrated the learning potential of rubrics. Because the present rubric was used for scoring, its use as a feedback tool requires separate instructional planning (Panadero et al. 2023). Oral responses can provide supplementary checks when writing ability is suspected of limiting answers, but should not be combined with initial scores without explicit rules. Follow-up involves examining responses, identifying needs, providing support, and reassessing. Subsequent tasks should use different contexts with comparable indicator demands. This approach connects assessment information with instruction (Shepard, 2019; Schildkamp et al., 2020). Score changes do not automatically establish a strategy's effect. The study contributes an initial diagnostic direction, while individual needs and follow-up outcomes require further examination.

Follow-up can begin with a classroom context integrating the three domains, such as allocating access to facilities. Teachers can ask students to identify the problem, explain users' interests, map rights and responsibilities, and compare actions and their consequences. This is a proposed instructional activity, not an activity reported as implemented in the study. Subsequent assessment should focus on the quality of connections between information and reasons so that changes in responses can be interpreted in greater detail. At school level, assessment can provide shared language for discussing learning needs. Teachers can use the indicators to inform planning discussions while treating class results as contextual information. The design does not support school

rankings, permanent student labels, or population-level capability comparisons. Within these limits, profiles can inform instructional planning and reflection without becoming performance measures that exceed the assessment's purpose.

Limitations

The study involved 15 fifth-grade students from one school. Results therefore describe participants' performance in the assessment context examined and cannot be generalized to all fifth-grade students or elementary students in other settings. The small sample warrants caution when interpreting measurement statistics, particularly internal consistency and relationships between scores. The constructed-response tasks used four social contexts. Responses may have been influenced by reading comprehension, writing ability, and familiarity with the stimuli. Lower scores cannot be attributed entirely to difficulties in the three assessed domains. Findings indicate capabilities expressed in written tasks; behavior in everyday interactions was not observed. Comparisons used equal maximum scores, but equivalence of difficulty and response demands was not established. Differences may reflect performance as well as question and scoring characteristics. Low alpha in two constructs limits total-score interpretation. Rescoring does not provide evidence of interrater reliability unless it is performed independently.

Blank responses received zero, meaning that the same score could represent no response or a completed answer not meeting the criteria. These cannot be distinguished interpretively without examining their causes. Aggregated findings do not establish whether gap patterns were consistent across individual students. The three gap labels were developed after observing the profiles and are exploratory summaries rather than validated diagnostic categories. The effectiveness of instructional recommendations has not been tested. Further research should examine pattern consistency across tasks and contexts, strengthen measurement evidence, and evaluate instructional follow-up. This work can begin with existing stored data and responses before expanding participation

Conclusion

The assessment of 15 fifth-grade students at SDN 23 Batara identified uneven achievement across indicators of social literacy, civic literacy, and decision making. Mean percentages of maximum possible scores were 28.06%, 32.50%, and 26.11%, respectively. Social problem identification exceeded perspective interpretation by 31.11 percentage points. Understanding shared rules and values exceeded understanding rights and responsibilities by 17.78 percentage points. Selecting actions and providing reasons exceeded identifying decision problems and evaluating consequences by 13.33 and 12.22 percentage points, respectively. These differences identify components of written task performance that warrant closer examination, rather than establishing the causes of students' difficulties. Indicator-level analysis provides a more detailed basis for instructional planning than construct totals alone. Initial priorities include explaining different perspectives, connecting rights and responsibilities to the people involved, and comparing alternatives and consequences before justifying choices. Individual support should be informed by examination of students' original responses. Findings remain specific to the participants and tasks; equal maximum scores do not establish equivalent difficulty, and exploratory internal consistency estimates limit total-score interpretation. The gap labels should therefore be used as provisional interpretive summaries rather than individual diagnoses. Further work should strengthen rubric and scoring evidence, examine the profiles across different contexts, and evaluate whether instructional follow-up supports students' progress.

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