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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) METHOD AS AN EFFORT TO INCREASE STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY ON FLOOD DISASTER MATERIAL IN CLASS VIII OF SMPN 1 WUNDULAKO

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the implementation of the FGD method as an effort to increase junior high school student learning activity on flood disaster material. This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach with 28 students as research subjects. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation and documentation, while data analysis techniques use a quantitative descriptive approach. The results of the study indicate that the application of the FGD method is able to increase student activity on flood disaster material. Students become more courageous in expressing opinions, actively asking and answering questions, and are able to work together in group discussions. The Focus Group Discussion method has proven effective as an alternative learning method to increase student learning activity on social studies material, especially related to flood disasters. These findings imply that educators should integrate the Focus Group Discussion method into their regular instructional strategies to foster active collaboration and critical engagement in social studies and disaster preparedness education.

Keywords: Flood, Focus Group Discussion, Learning Outcomes, Social Studies

A. Introduction

Social Studies learning is crucial for enhancing students' understanding of various social, geographical, and environmental phenomena, including natural disasters. Given that Indonesia is

a country with a high level of disaster vulnerability, flooding is a crucial topic to master (Ujung et al., 2019). Students learning IPS are expected to increase environmental awareness and concern by understanding the causes, impacts, and mitigation efforts. Flooding, essentially a natural process, can become a disaster for humans if it affects people, causing loss of life and property. In the context of natural systems, flooding occurs where flooding occurs; it will affect people if they inhabit areas that are naturally floodplain (Setiawan et al., 2020).

Education is an effort to develop student quality, intelligence, and potential, as well as foster creativity, broad knowledge, and positive, responsible personalities (Khikmah, dkk, 2022). Education is an effort to change a person's attitudes and behavior in an effort to mature humans through teaching efforts within education, with the aim of developing human qualities, intelligence, and potential (Cahyani et al., 2020).

Focus group discussions are a data collection process to address a specific problem through group discussions (Hidayat et al., 2022). Focus group discussions are a data collection process aimed at obtaining data and information from a group based on the results of discussions addressing a problem. Focus group discussions typically consist of 7-11 people (Aswat, 2016). A focus group discussion can be as small as 7-11 people, but can be increased to 12 people (Oktafiani et al., 2023). This is because too few participants will not provide interesting variation, and too many will reduce the opportunity for group members to share ideas. However, depending on the research objectives, this number can be increased or decreased. This value-focused discussion method can impact student learning.

A focus group discussion is a focused group discussion to discuss a specific issue in an informal setting, with varying numbers of participants, guided by a teacher as moderator (Anwar & Aceh, 2019). A focus group discussion is also a focused discussion, with only 8 to 12 people in a group led by a competent facilitator, who aims to engage the discussion members actively (Aini & Yuliana, 2021).

This allows each student to express their opinions based on their knowledge and experience related to the topic being studied. Through focus group discussions, teachers can determine students' level of understanding and mastery of the subject matter. The purpose of a focus group discussion is to gather information aimed at improving student learning outcomes (Bisjoe & Rizal, 2018). Indirectly, the use of focus group discussions also teaches students to respect differences of opinion, to appreciate that everyone has different abilities in understanding the material, and to solve problems in difficult material. The use of this method is expected to maximize the desired learning objectives and improve the quality of student learning outcomes (Purba, 2019).

Based on initial observations, several obstacles were identified in the learning process in grade VIII of SMPN 1 Wundulako. These observations indicated that learning tended to be teacher-centered, resulting in a lack of student interaction and participation. Students rarely participated in in-depth discussions about environmental issues and were typically passive. This situation contributed to unsatisfactory learning outcomes, particularly regarding the topic of flooding.

To address this issue, a learning approach is needed that encourages students to participate more actively in class, enhances their critical thinking skills, and encourages them to collaborate with one another. FGD is a learning approach based on focused group discussions that allows students to discuss, analyze problems, and find solutions. This method is believed to improve students' conceptual understanding, engagement, and analytical skills.

Despite the growing recognition of disaster education in Social Studies and the widespread application of FGD in qualitative research, a significant research gap remains regarding the pedagogical use of FGD as an active instructional strategy in junior high school classrooms, particularly for flood disaster mitigation topics. Existing literature predominantly treats FGD as a data collection technique rather than a structured learning model designed to cultivate student engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving (Alberida et al., 2022; Harjito et al., 2021; Hidayah & Nurita, 2022; Hunaidah et al., 2020; Miner-Romanoff et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2023). Furthermore, while numerous studies have documented the limitations of teacher-centered instruction and low student participation in Indonesian schools, few have empirically examined how FGD-based learning can systematically transform passive classroom dynamics into interactive, student-driven environments that simultaneously enhance conceptual mastery and practical disaster preparedness awareness. This gap is especially pronounced in geographically vulnerable contexts like Wundulako, where contextualized, participatory pedagogies are urgently needed to bridge theoretical flood knowledge with actionable mitigation strategies. Consequently, this study seeks to address this deficiency by investigating the

implementation and learning impact of FGD as a dedicated classroom model, thereby generating empirical evidence on how structured group discussions can improve both academic achievement and environmental resilience among middle school IPS students.

By using FGD when studying flood disaster material, it is hoped that students will gain a broader understanding of flooding, understand its relationship to the surrounding environment, and be able to develop appropriate solutions or disaster mitigation measures. Furthermore, this learning model can create an active, communicative, and collaborative learning environment.

The urgency of this research is underscored by the escalating frequency and severity of flood disasters in Indonesia, which demands immediate and effective educational interventions to build community resilience from a young age. Relying on traditional, teacher-centered instruction in geographically vulnerable areas like Wundulako not only perpetuates low student engagement but also critically fails to equip the younger generation with the analytical and collaborative skills necessary for real-world disaster mitigation (MGB et al., 2026; Sejati et al., 2025). Consequently, empirically validating the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method as a structured pedagogical tool is no longer merely an academic exercise, but a pressing educational imperative (Abidin et al., 2025; Sejati et al., 2017; Shabina et al., 2024; Yaakop et al., 2023). Implementing and evaluating this participatory approach now is essential to rapidly transform passive learners into proactive, environmentally aware citizens who can translate theoretical flood knowledge into actionable, practical mitigation strategies within their own communities before disaster strikes (Nugroho et al., 2022; Thronsao et al., 2025). This study aims to understand the implementation of the FGD method as an effort to increase junior high school student learning activity on flood disaster material

B. Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is the understanding of learning activities consisting of actions that emerge and occur simultaneously in the classroom. In an educational context, CAR refers to actions taken by teachers to systematically structure learning with the goal of achieving better results (Khikmah, dkk, 2022). Observation is a data collection technique carried out through observation, accompanied by recording the condition or behavior of the target object. Observation is the systematic observation and recording of the phenomena being studied (Sudjana & Rifai, 2015). Observation techniques involve systematically observing and recording the phenomena being investigated. In a broad sense, observation is not limited to direct or indirect observations. According to Sutrisno Hadi, the observation method is defined as the systematic observation and recording of the phenomena being investigated. Observation is a data collection method in which researchers or their collaborators record information as they witness it during the research (HL et al., 2022).

This research was conducted to address learning issues in class VIII of SMPN 1 Wundulako. Lack of student participation in learning is a problem that must be addressed immediately. Planning is the first stage of Classroom Action Research. The researcher explained what flooding disasters are like and how to mitigate them. This research was conducted in November 2025. This research was conducted at SMPN 1 Wundulako, which coincided with the eighth grade students. SMP Negeri 1 Wundulako is one of the junior high schools in Kolaka Regency that offers quality education with B accreditation and ISO 9001:2008 certification. With the existence of SMPN 1 Wundulako, it is hoped that it can contribute to educating the nation's children in Wundulako District, Kolaka Regency.

The number of students in this study was 28. The researcher used an observation sheet to determine the learning activities of students in class VIII at SMPN 1 Wundulako. Based on the results of the observation sheet, the learning activities of class VIII students at SMPN 1 Wundulako will be observed.

2. Instruments

The instrument used in this study was observation of student activity, which was assessed in seven aspects. These aspects include attendance and preparation, participation in working on problems, participation in asking questions, participation in answering questions, participation in responding, participation in presentations, and learning concentration. The data collection using observation and documentation. The observation using the observation sheet and the documentation collecting the student score before research and the school infrastructure. The documentation as a completing the primary data (Arikunto, 2010, 2013).

In conducting this research, strict ethical considerations were upheld to protect the rights, privacy, and well-being of the student participants, particularly given that they are minors. First, informed consent and assent, were obtained prior to data collection; formal permission was secured from the school administration (SMPN 1 Wundulako) and the parents or guardians of the Grade VIII students, while the students themselves provided voluntary assent to participate. Second, confidentiality and anonymity, were strictly maintained. All data collected through observation sheets and documentation, including the assessment of the seven activity aspects and prior student scores, were anonymized using identification codes or pseudonyms to ensure no individual student could be publicly identified in the research reports. Third, the principle of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw, was emphasized, guaranteeing that students could opt out of the observation or discussion activities at any time without facing any academic penalty or negative impact on their grades. Fourth, data security, was ensured by storing all physical observation sheets and documented records in a secure location, accessible only to the research team, and using them exclusively for academic analysis. Finally, the principle of non-maleficence and beneficence, was applied by conducting observations as unobtrusively as possible to avoid causing anxiety or disrupting the natural learning environment, ensuring that the research process ultimately contributed to a safer, more engaging, and beneficial learning experience for the students.

3. Technique of Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study was quantitative descriptive. Quantitative research relies heavily on numbers, from data collection and interpretation to the presentation of the results. Quantitative data analysis included observations of student activities and FGD results (Syahroni, 2022).

Each aspect of learning engagement was assessed based on behavioral indicators that emerged during the learning process. The assessment score ranged from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating very poor, 2 poor, 3 sufficient, and 4 good. The higher the score, the better the student's level of engagement, readiness, and involvement in the learning process. This assessment aims to provide an objective picture of student learning outcomes, not only from a cognitive perspective but also from an attitude and participation perspective during learning activities.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

Researchers observed various indicators of student activity, ranging from learning readiness, participation in assignments, question-and-answer interactions, to involvement in presentation activities. The research was conducted in stages over two cycles, with student activity data in Cycles I and II comprehensively recorded to evaluate the development and impact of improvements in FGD implementation on the level of student engagement and participation in the classroom.

The results of observations of 28 students in the cycle 1 showed that student activity is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Score of Student Activeness*

No	Aspect	Very Poor	Poor	Sufficient	Good
1	Attendance and readiness	1	2	25	
2	Participation in working on assingnments		4	20	4
3	Participation in asking questions	1	5	22	
4	Participation in answering questions		1	27	
5	Participation in responding to questions		3	25	
6	Participation in presentations	2	15	11	
7	Learning in presentations		2	26	

Source: Research Results, 2023

The results of observations in the cycle 2 showed that student activity is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 2. *Score of Student Activeness*

No	Aspect	Very Poor	Poor	Sufficient	Good
1	Attendance and readiness			24	4
2	Participation in working on assingnments			3	25
3	Participation in asking questions			22	6
4	Participation in answering questions			20	8
5	Participation in responding to questions			21	7
6	Participation in presentations		14	10	4
7	Learning in presentations			4	24

Source: Research Results, 2023

A comparative analysis of student activeness between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 reveals a marked improvement across nearly all observed aspects following the refinement of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) implementation. In Cycle 1, the majority of the 28 students were clustered in the "Sufficient" category for most indicators, with limited representation in the "Good" category, for instance, only 4 students demonstrated good participation in completing assignments, and none actively asked questions, answered questions, or engaged in presentations at a good level. By Cycle 2, however, a clear positive shift is evident: the "Good" category saw substantial increases, such as 25 students showing good participation in working on assignments (up from 4), 8 students actively answering questions (up from 0), and a dramatic rise in "Learning in presentations," where 24 students achieved a good rating compared to none in the first cycle. Although "Participation in presentations" remained a relative challenge, with 14 students still categorized as "Poor" in Cycle 2, the emergence of 4 students in the "Good" category indicates gradual progress. Overall, the data illustrates that the iterative application of FGDs fostered a more interactive and participatory classroom environment, with students demonstrating greater readiness, engagement in questioning and responding, and deeper involvement in presentation-based learning, thereby confirming the method's potential to enhance active learning in Social Studies instruction on flood disaster mitigation.

Based on the research result, student learning outcomes generally demonstrate a high level of activeness and engagement during the learning process. Students' attendance and readiness to engage in learning are good, as demonstrated by discipline and readiness to learn the material. Student participation in the learning process, such as asking questions, responding to questions, and engaging in conversations, also results in increased student courage and activeness. Students can participate in presentation activities with strong self-confidence.

Based on the overall results of observations and analysis from Cycle I to Cycle II, it can be concluded that the application of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method has proven effective in increasing student activity and learning outcomes in the Social Studies subject of flood disaster mitigation. Significant improvements in almost all indicators, from discipline and readiness to learn, courage in asking and answering questions, to self-confidence during presentations, indicate that this method is able to create a much more interactive and participatory classroom environment. Although the aspect of direct participation in presentations still leaves room for further improvement, in general this study confirms that FGDs successfully encourage students to learn more actively, independently, and confidently.

2. Discussion

The research results indicate that students' readiness to participate in the learning process is considered good. This is evident in their persistence in participating in educational activities and their enthusiasm for the learning material. Consistency and good readiness are important factors supporting the learning process, as students can participate in each activity without experiencing much difficulty. From a participation perspective, students demonstrated very active participation in the learning process. Participation in questions, asking questions, answering questions, responding to questions, and presenting presentations demonstrates that students are beginning to express their learning outcomes and are actively involved in learning activities (Amalia et al., 2019; Sejati et al., 2020). This active participation facilitates positive interactions between teachers and students, as well as between students, so that learning is not

solely focused on the teacher but also actively supported by students (Sejati et al., 2021).

Positive learning activities throughout the learning process are ongoing. A significant number of students are able to focus on the material presented and the activities undertaken. This type of constructive criticism impacts students' understanding of the material (Juliandri & Anugraheni, 2020; Sejati et al., 2016). The research results indicate that the learning process can increase student engagement, which also influences material comprehension.

Furthermore, the enhanced student engagement observed throughout the learning process underscores the effectiveness of FGD as a pedagogical strategy for fostering meaningful learning in Social Studies, particularly on contextually relevant topics such as flood disaster mitigation. The structured yet informal nature of FGD created a safe space for students to articulate their ideas, challenge peers' perspectives, and collaboratively construct knowledge, processes that align with constructivist learning principles and promote deeper cognitive processing (Harianto et al., 2019; Harun et al., 2017). This collaborative dynamic not only strengthened students' conceptual understanding of flooding causes, impacts, and mitigation strategies but also cultivated essential 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, communication, and empathy toward diverse viewpoints. Importantly, the increase in student activeness from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 suggests that iterative refinement of FGD facilitation, such as clearer role assignments, targeted prompting, and timely feedback can significantly optimize student-centered learning outcomes. These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting participatory methods in disaster education and highlight the potential of FGDs to transform passive classrooms into vibrant communities of inquiry, where students are not only consumers of knowledge but active agents in developing contextually grounded, resilient responses to environmental challenges.

A closer examination of the data reveals a nuanced area for continued pedagogical refinement, particularly regarding the participation in presentations aspect. Despite significant gains in collaborative tasks, 14 students remained in the "Poor" category for this specific metric in Cycle 2. This indicates that while the FGD method successfully fosters a low-stakes, psychologically safe environment for small-group dialogue, as evidenced by the dramatic surge in asking, answering, and responding to questions, the transition to formal, whole-class presentations still induces hesitation for a substantial portion of the class (Davidson, 2026; Dyer, 2024; Nadile et al., 2021). This discrepancy suggests that confidence built within an intimate focus group does not automatically translate to public speaking readiness (Fatimah & ., 2024; Kazanskaia, 2025). To address this bottleneck, future iterations of this classroom action research should incorporate graduated scaffolding. Strategies such as having small groups present their findings to another small group before addressing the entire class, or providing structured presentation templates and sentence starters, can help reduce cognitive load and performance anxiety, ensuring that the communicative benefits of FGD are fully realized across all dimensions of student activeness (Kho & Ting, 2023; Nurwanto & Apriani, 2025; Putra & Kayen, 2025).

Furthermore, the observed increase in student activeness must be understood not merely as a metric of improved classroom dynamics, but as a critical indicator of deeper cognitive and contextual engagement with the subject matter. In the specific context of Wundulako, where flood vulnerability is a lived reality, the FGD method transforms abstract Social Studies concepts into tangible, community-relevant problems. When students actively debate the root causes of local flooding and collaboratively propose mitigation strategies, they engage in authentic, place-based problem-solving rather than rote memorization (Littrell et al., 2025; López et al., 2023; Smith, 2023; Young et al., 2025). This active co-construction of knowledge ensures that the learning is deeply internalized, making it significantly more likely that students will retain and apply these disaster preparedness concepts in their daily lives (Lestari & Suwanto, 2024; Oktari & Kumala, 2020; Pamaong & Shaw, 2025). Ultimately, the success of the FGD method in this study demonstrates that when students are positioned as active investigators of their own environment, the classroom becomes a vital incubator for the environmental awareness and civic resilience necessary to navigate real-world natural disasters (Artika & Rosemary, 2023; Pambudi et al., 2025; Yildirim et al., 2024).

D. Conclusion

The use of the FGD method in teaching flood disasters to eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Wundulako was effective in enhancing student learning. This method provides opportunities for students to actively participate in the learning process through discussions, group problem-solving, and brainstorming. Through this type of active learning, students learned more about the concept of flooding, from its definition, causes, and impacts to mitigation efforts. This active learning was evident in increased attendance and readiness to learn, students' courage in asking

and answering questions, and their ability to express opinions during discussions and presentations. The previously teacher-centered learning process shifted to a more interactive, communicative, and collaborative approach, resulting in a more lively and conducive classroom atmosphere. The Focus Group Discussion method can be considered an effective alternative teaching strategy, particularly for social studies materials related to environmental phenomena such as flooding. Theoretically, this method can also improve students' social skills, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills. FGDs can be applied methodically to improve the quality of learning processes and outcomes in schools.

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