

## Study of Humanistic Theory in Social Sciences Learning to Improve Students' Character and Social Awareness in Era 4.0

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**Abstract:** *This research examines the application of humanistic theory in Social Sciences (IPS) learning in Indonesia to improve students' character and social awareness in the 4.0 era. Humanistic theory, which focuses on individual development and meeting students' psychological needs, aims to build empathy, tolerance and social responsibility. The use of technology such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to enrich learning experiences and strengthen humanistic-based learning. However, challenges related to limited infrastructure and unequal access to technology are still obstacles to effective implementation. This research highlights the importance of integrating humanistic theory with technology to improve the quality of education in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** humanistic theory, social studies learning, educational technology, student character, Era 4.0

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The industrial revolution 4.0 has had a significant impact on various sectors, including education. This era was marked by technological advances such as *Internet of Things* (IoT), artificial intelligence (*Artificial Intelligence*), big data, and *cloud computing* which creates opportunities as well as challenges in building a modern education system. This technology allows learning to be more personalized, flexible, and adaptive to individual student needs (Schwab, 2017). On the other hand, unwise use of technology can create the risk of dehumanization, where social interaction is reduced and students' character is less developed.

Education is the main means for developing human potential. Social Sciences (IPS) learning has an important role in forming students' character and social awareness. This subject is designed to provide students with an understanding of society, social interactions, and their responsibilities as individuals living in a community. However, challenges in the social studies learning process in schools are often related to teaching methods that tend to be cognitive in nature and pay less attention to affective aspects and students' personal development. Approaches that only focus on understanding academic concepts often fail to create meaningful learning experiences, where students are able to develop high character and social awareness. Big challenges also arise in the 4.0 era, when students tend to interact more with technology than with authentic social interactions.

The humanistic approach is very relevant because it focuses on students as complete individuals, both from a cognitive and social perspective. Humanistic theory, pioneered by figures such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, offers a different perspective in the world of education. This theory emphasizes the importance of developing individual potential holistically, which includes cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. Education is not only seen as a transfer of knowledge, but also as a process of self-development and self-

actualization. In the context of social studies learning, a humanistic approach can make a significant contribution by encouraging students to better understand themselves, their social environment and their social responsibilities. This is expected to facilitate the development of students' character, such as a sense of empathy, cooperation and concern for the social problems around them.

According to (Maslow, 1943) education should encourage individuals to achieve self-actualization, which is the top of the hierarchy of human needs. Abraham Maslow emphasized that an individual will be able to learn optimally if his basic needs are met, the needs in question are a sense of security and love. This implies the importance of creating a comfortable and supportive learning environment. Meanwhile, (Rogers, 1969) emphasized the importance of creating a learning environment that allows students to freely express themselves and feel valued, so that they are able to develop their own potential optimally.

The implementation of humanistic theory in social studies learning is in line with the Pancasila student profile in the independent curriculum which emphasizes the values of independence, mutual cooperation and social justice (Kemdibudristek, 2022), and allows teachers to direct the teaching and learning process in a more personal way, where students are given the opportunity to express their feelings, opinions and views on social issues. The humanistic-based social studies learning process not only increases knowledge, but also strengthens students' social awareness and character. This awareness is very important to form individuals who care about society and are able to contribute positively, so that it can be a strategy to improve mastery of academic material and build students' character and empathy amidst the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era.

This research aims to examine how the implementation of humanistic theory in social studies

learning can improve students' character and social awareness. With this approach, it is hoped that students can be actively involved in the learning process which not only sharpens their cognitive abilities, but also shapes them into individuals who are empathetic, have a sense of social responsibility, and are committed to good moral values.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation

### 2.1 Humanistic Learning Theory

Humanistic learning theory emerged in the 1970s, is an approach in educational psychology that places humans at the center of all learning processes. This approach emerged as a reaction to previous learning theories, namely psychoanalytic and behavioristic. Humanistic theory violates human values which emphasize the stimulus-response aspect, humans are considered as helpless individuals and can be controlled by the environment, and they are even considered to have very little ability to hone their own abilities. In contrast, humanistic learning theory emphasizes overall human development, including cognitive, affective and emotional aspects.

Abraham Maslow is a pioneer of humanistic psychology. Maslow believed that humans move to accept and understand themselves as much as possible. Maslow's very famous thought is about *Hierarchy of Needs* (hierarchy of needs) (Maslow, 1943). Humans have 5 basic needs, namely physiological needs (*physiological needs*), the need for security (*safety and security needs*), the need for affection and belonging (*love and belonging needs*), the need for self-esteem (*esteem needs*), and the need for self-actualization (*self-actualization*).



Figure 1. Hierarchy of needs according to Abraham Maslow

In a learning context, students need to feel physically and emotionally comfortable before they can really focus on learning. Humanistic theory encourages teachers to not only pay attention to cognitive aspects, but also ensure that students' emotional needs are met.

Carl Rogers is another figure in humanistic theory, Carl Rogers introduced the concept *client-centered therapy* in clinical psychology and then apply it to education. Rogers believes that every individual has the potential to develop and learn optimally if they are in a supportive environment. (Rogers, 1969). The environment in question is an environment that is safe, open and full of respect for

individuals. The most effective learning occurs when students feel that the learning is relevant to their lives and has meaningful value. Therefore, the role of the teacher in this theory is not just as a teacher, but more as a facilitator who helps students find the meaning of learning.

Rogers believes that students who study are not forced or forced, but they are allowed to freely learn, students are expected to be able to make their own decisions and be responsible for their choices. Rogers stated 5 important things in the humanistic learning process in the book *Freedom to Learn* (Rogers, 1969). First meaningful learning (*meaningful learning*), the most effective learning is learning that is meaningful for the individual. This occurs when students are able to relate new knowledge to their personal experiences. Students are more likely to remember and apply what they learn if they feel that the material is relevant to their needs and interests. Learning like this will allow students not only to understand concepts but also to interpret them in depth.

Second, freedom in learning (*freedom to learn*). Freedom for students to determine their own learning path is of the utmost importance. Students are encouraged to take initiative, explore their interests and learn according to their needs and desires. The freedom in question includes the freedom to try, make mistakes, and learn from those experiences. Learning will become more personal and authentic for each individual.

Third, the role of the teacher as a facilitator (*facilitation role of the teacher*). The teacher does not impose authority or act as the sole source of information. Instead, teachers act as facilitators who create a supportive learning environment. Teachers must help students find ways of learning that suit them, provide encouragement, and demonstrate empathy and authenticity in their interactions with students. This creates a learning atmosphere that is open and free from fear or pressure.

Fourth, the importance of experience in learning (*learning through experience*). Significant learning often comes from direct experience. This process involves active involvement of students in relevant and contextual activities. He argues that students learn best through practice, reflection, and interaction with their environment. This approach accommodates students' needs to understand the world in a real and pragmatic way.

Fifth, supportive interpersonal relationships (*Supportive Interpersonal Relationships*), the importance of positive relationships between teachers and students in the learning process. Teachers need to demonstrate empathy (the ability to understand students' points of view), warmth (genuine caring), and authenticity (consistency between words and actions). These supportive interpersonal relationships create a safe and comfortable environment for students to learn, experiment, and develop themselves.

One of the main principles of humanistic learning theory is student autonomy in the learning process. This autonomy refers to students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning, including determining goals, ways of learning, and evaluating learning outcomes. This theory

recognizes that each individual has a unique way of learning and has the right to determine the method that best suits him. This is in line with the concept *self-directed learning* introduced by Malcolm Knowles, where students are encouraged to study independently by utilizing various available resources. In this context, teachers act as guides who help students identify their learning needs and provide the necessary support (Knowles, 1975).

The unique character of humanistic theory is the focus on interpersonal relationships in learning. Rogers emphasized that the relationship between teachers and students is a key factor in creating an effective learning environment. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, warmth, and authenticity in their interactions with students can help create an atmosphere that supports growth and learning. Empathy means teachers understand students' feelings and perspectives, warmth creates a comfortable atmosphere, and authenticity indicates that teachers are honest and sincere in their relationships with students. These three elements form the basis of what Rogers called facilitative teaching (Rogers, 1969).

In a humanistic view, learning is not just about gathering information, but also about understanding and internalizing experiences. This is in line with the views of John Dewey, who, although not directly a humanistic figure, had a significant influence on this theory. Dewey argued that education is a process of reconstruction of experience, where students learn through active involvement in situations relevant to their lives (Dewey, 1938). Thus, humanistic theory encourages learning approaches that involve students actively in the learning process, such as through discussions, collaborative projects, or simulations.

## 2.2 Industrial Revolution 4.0

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 is an important milestone in the history of technological and world economic development which has brought major changes to various sectors of life. This concept first appeared in 2011 in the context of discussions about industrial development strategies in Germany, which aimed to increase efficiency and productivity through the use of digital technologies. Industrial Revolution 4.0 involves the integration of digital technology, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), big data, cloud computing, and automation technology in industrial processes. In contrast to previous industrial revolutions, which focused on gradual mechanization, electrification and digitalization, Industrial Revolution 4.0 combines these technological elements to create systems that are smarter, more adaptive and globally connected (Schwab, 2016).

The main characteristic of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 is connectivity which allows various devices and machines to communicate with each other via the internet network. IoT is one of the core technologies in this revolution, enabling real-time data collection and analysis to improve operational efficiency. In the manufacturing industry, for example, this technology allows the creation of smart factories, where production systems can run automatically

with minimal human intervention. Additionally, big data and cloud computing provide stronger analytical capabilities, enabling companies to make decisions based on accurate and relevant data. This not only increases productivity, but also helps companies design more effective strategies to meet changing market needs (Kagermann et al., 2013).

Not only in the industrial sector, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 also has a major impact on various other fields, including health, education, transportation and government. In the health sector, IoT-based technology is used to develop smart medical devices that can monitor patient conditions in real-time. Artificial intelligence technology is also used to analyze medical data to provide faster and more accurate diagnoses. In the transportation sector, the concept of autonomous vehicles equipped with sensors and AI technology is one of the innovations that is developing rapidly. Meanwhile, in government, blockchain technology is used to increase transparency and efficiency in data management and public services (Xu et al., 2018).

In the field of education, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has changed the traditional learning paradigm to become more technology-based. Digital technologies such as e-learning, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) enable more interactive and personalized learning. Additionally, the use of big data and AI in education helps institutions to understand students' needs in more depth and design learning methods accordingly. Thus, this revolution not only changes the way students learn, but also provides opportunities for them to develop skills relevant to the needs of modern industry, such as digital literacy, complex problem solving, and creativity (Prifti et al., 2017).

However, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 also presents significant challenges, especially regarding its impact on the workforce. Automation and the use of robots in production processes have replaced many manual jobs, raising concerns about unemployment and economic inequality. Jobs that are routine and do not require high skills are the most vulnerable to the impact of automation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve the skills of the workforce through training and education so that they can adapt to the new labor market demands. In addition, this revolution also raises ethical issues, such as data privacy and cyber security, which need to be addressed through appropriate regulations and policies (Schwab, 2016).

On the other hand, Industrial Revolution 4.0 offers great opportunities to improve the quality of human life. With increasingly sophisticated technology, many tasks that previously took a long time can now be completed more quickly and efficiently. In this context, humans have more time to focus on more creative and innovative aspects of life. In the business world, the use of digital technology allows companies to create products and services that are more personalized and in line with consumer needs. This creates a more dynamic and competitive business ecosystem, where innovation is the key to success (Kagermann et al., 2013).

The transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 also have an impact on the way governments

and society view sustainable development. With technology supporting energy efficiency and better resource management, this revolution is paving the way for the implementation of environmentally friendly practices. For example, IoT technology is used to manage energy in smart cities, while blockchain technology helps in tracking resources to make them more transparent and accountable. In this case, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 provides an opportunity to overcome global challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity through technological innovation (Xu et al., 2018).

Overall, Industrial Revolution 4.0 is a phenomenon that brings fundamental changes in various aspects of human life. By integrating digital technology, AI, IoT and big data, this revolution not only increases efficiency and productivity, but also opens up new opportunities for innovation and sustainable development. Nevertheless, challenges such as unemployment due to automation, data privacy issues, and economic inequality require serious attention. In this context, education and training play an important role in preparing individuals to face the demands of this new era. With the right approach, Industrial Revolution 4.0 can be a tool to improve the quality of human life while creating a more sustainable and inclusive world (Schwab, 2016).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this writing is literature study by collecting, analyzing and synthesizing information from various written sources such as books, journals, scientific articles, research reports and official documents. This method does not involve collecting data directly in the field, but instead utilizes secondary data that is already available. In this approach, researchers seek to build a solid theoretical foundation and identify gaps or deficiencies in previous research. Literature studies are important because they can provide a broad and in-depth perspective on a particular topic without requiring a lot of time and money, so they are often used in exploratory or reflective research (Zed, 2008).

In the learning context, library research has a very significant role in understanding educational theories, including humanistic theory. Humanistic theory pioneered by figures such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow emphasizes the importance of student-centered learning, a supportive learning environment, and meaningful learning experiences. An effective learning process occurs when students feel accepted, supported, and have the freedom to explore their potential. By utilizing literature study, these principles can be analyzed in depth to understand their relevance in learning Social Sciences (IPS), especially in building students' character and social awareness in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Research regarding the application of humanistic theory in Social Sciences (IPS) learning in Indonesia shows that this approach can significantly improve students' character and social awareness, especially in the 4.0 era which is dominated

by technological advances. The humanistic approach focuses on students' personal development and recognition of individual potential as a basis for achieving self-actualization. In the context of social studies education that occurs in Indonesia, humanistic theory can be applied to encourage students to understand deeper social values and develop attitudes of empathy and social responsibility towards issues faced by global society.

Humanistic theory in education, developed by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, has an important role in creating more humane learning. Maslow in the hierarchy of needs theory explains that individuals can only achieve their best potential after fulfilling basic needs such as physical needs, security and social needs. On the other hand, Carl Rogers argued that a supportive environment, unconditional acceptance and mutual respect, is very important for individual development. In the context of social studies learning, these two humanistic principles can be applied to help students not only master science but also develop the social awareness and skills needed to face the challenges of the times.

In Indonesia, the application of humanistic theory in social studies learning aims to develop students' character and increase social awareness. In learning, students are given the opportunity to explore and discuss social issues, such as social inequality, cultural differences, and human rights. Through an approach based on social values, students are invited to better understand that social science is not only about facts but also about empathy, responsibility and the desire to create positive change in society (Sukmana, 2020).

One of the methods used in social studies learning with a humanistic approach is the application of group discussions and collaborative projects. The humanistic method allows students to discuss social events that are relevant to students' lives. The teacher acts as a facilitator, providing space for students to express opinions and participate in learning actively. The results of this research show that by involving students in discussions and solving social problems, students are more involved in learning and feel valued. This also contributes to the development of students' character, which is more empathetic, open, and solution-oriented.

In research conducted by Roesli (2021), it was found that social studies learning that integrates humanistic theory is able to improve students' social skills, such as the ability to work in teams, respect differences of opinion and resolve conflicts peacefully. The humanistic approach is very effective in preparing students to face social dynamics in an increasingly complex and connected world.

The need for character and social awareness in education today cannot be denied, especially in the midst of increasingly rapid technological developments and globalization. Humanistic theory emphasizes the importance of self-development and individual psychological fulfillment which underlies the importance of character in social life. Social studies learning based on a humanistic approach not only aims to develop knowledge but also to develop attitudes and behavior that reflect social responsibility. Students must be



taught about human rights, not only to learn theory and facts, but also to feel the experiences of other people who are less fortunate and look for solutions that can help others. These activities will develop a sense of responsibility for the welfare of other people and society in general.

Technological advances in education open up various new opportunities to improve the quality of learning. In the 4.0 era, technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are increasingly being applied in learning to provide a more immersive and comprehensive experience. In the context of social studies learning based on humanistic theory, technology can be used as a useful tool to enrich students' learning experiences, as well as increase social awareness in a deeper way.

By using Virtual Reality (VR), students can immediately be given experience exploring the social, cultural and historical world. Through VR, students can be invited to visit places that are difficult to reach physically, such as visiting historical sites or areas affected by social and environmental change. Learning using technology like this can provide a deeper learning experience and facilitate the development of empathy for social conditions that exist in the real world. Students can experience life in areas affected by poverty or refugee crises which provides a new perspective in their understanding of global issues. (Vaughan et al., 2018)

The use of VR in social studies learning allows students to simulate complex social situations, such as elections or social conflicts, which can help them better understand social dynamics in a more realistic context. Research by Lai et al. (2021) show that the use of VR in history and geography learning gives students a deeper experience of the context of place and time, which increases students' understanding of the material and social characteristics of certain situations.

Augmented Reality (AR) has a significant role in social studies learning. AR technology allows students to visualize social concepts that are difficult to understand, such as the structure of society, government processes, or economic systems in a more interactive way. By using AR devices, students can view and interact with 3D objects depicting specific social or historical situations, which enriches their understanding of the subject matter. AR technology allows students to explore educational content in a more flexible and engaging way, creating a more enjoyable learning experience. A study by Williams et al. (2020) show that AR increases student engagement in complex topics such as social change, where students can interact directly with visual data and gain a clearer understanding.

Research by Zhang et al. (2022) show that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology can be used to develop personalized materials, optimize students' learning experiences and provide guidance that better suits learning styles.

The application of VR, AR and AI in social studies learning in Indonesia can increase students' interest and motivation to learn more deeply about social and historical issues. The use of this technology provides a learning

experience that does not only focus on theory, but also introduces students to a broader social context, which is very relevant to humanistic-based learning goals. Thus, technology not only helps students gain knowledge, but also shapes their character and social awareness in a more contextual and realistic way.

Although the application of humanistic theory in Social Sciences (IPS) learning in Indonesia offers many benefits in developing students' character and social awareness, there are several shortcomings that need to be considered. One of the main shortcomings of the humanistic approach is the challenge in implementing it in classrooms which are still dominated by traditional learning methods. Most teaching in Indonesia still focuses on learning based on direct teaching which prioritizes content mastery rather than students' social skills and character. Teachers are often hampered in creating learning spaces that truly support students' character development, due to a lack of resources and training to apply humanistic theory effectively.

Humanistic theory emphasizes the importance of fulfilling students' psychological and emotional needs, not all schools in Indonesia have adequate facilities to create an environment that supports this. As expressed by Carl Rogers, humanistic theory demands the creation of a supportive atmosphere, but in many schools, especially in areas with limited resources, this is still difficult to realize. Learning that focuses too much on a dense curriculum and exams also often neglects the development of social character which can actually be achieved through a more inclusive and participatory approach.

Another drawback is related to the application of technology in education. Although technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) offer great potential in enriching students' learning experiences, uneven infrastructure is a significant barrier to their implementation in many Indonesian schools. Many schools, especially those in remote areas, do not have sufficient access to this technology, resulting in disparities in education quality widening. This reduces the potential of technology to strengthen deep humanistic theory-based learning.

Era 4.0 provides great challenges and opportunities for the world of education, especially with the presence of technology that allows faster and wider access to information. In social studies learning, technology can be used to enrich students' learning experiences, increase their interactions in social discussions, and broaden their insight into global issues. However, this research also shows that technology must be used wisely, to not only speed up access to information, but also to develop students' critical thinking and social awareness.

Finally, although humanistic theory focuses on individual development, sometimes this approach is unable to address systemic needs in education. In Indonesia, major problems such as inequality in access to education, shortage of trained teachers, and imbalance in resource distribution often become obstacles to the implementation of a humanistic approach.

Without deep systemic improvements in the education sector, the application of humanistic theory will have difficulty achieving a significant impact at the national level. Therefore, although the humanistic approach offers great potential in improving character and social awareness, structural and infrastructure challenges in Indonesian education still need to be addressed to maximize its benefits.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The application of humanistic theory in Social Sciences (IPS) learning in Indonesia can make a significant contribution to developing students' character and social awareness, especially in the 4.0 era. This theory, with its focus on individual development and meeting students' psychological needs, provides a strong basis for creating learning that is more inclusive, empathetic, and based on social values. Through a humanistic approach, students not only gain social knowledge, but are also equipped with important social skills, such as empathy, tolerance, and responsibility for social issues that exist in society.

However, the application of this theory in Indonesia faces a number of challenges, especially in terms of implementation in classrooms which still rely heavily on traditional methods and lack of facilities that support humanistic-based learning. However, technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) offer great potential to enrich students' learning experiences and support character development and social awareness. This technology allows students to learn more immersively and interactively, although the unequal distribution of technology access is one of the obstacles that needs to be overcome.

Another weakness lies in the inequality of the education system in Indonesia, where limited infrastructure and lack of resources are major obstacles in maximizing the optimal application of humanistic theory. For this reason, greater efforts are needed to improve the quality of education, both in terms of facilities and teacher training, so that humanistic-based learning can be implemented effectively at all levels of society.

Overall, although there are challenges in implementation, the application of humanistic theory in social studies learning in Indonesia, supported by technological advances, has the potential to create a young generation who is not only academically intelligent, but also has high character and social awareness, which is very important in facing global challenges in the 4.0 era.

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