This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

Historical Thinking and Nationalism among Indonesian Junior High School Students

Retno Wulandari[1*], Indah Permatasari[2], Dewi Puspitasari[3], Anisa Rahmawati[4]
[1,2,3,4,] Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia
*Corresponding author: retnognze2001@gmail.com

DOI: https://doi.org/10.60153/41sm8g17

Received: October 2, 2026; Approved: October 16, 2026; Published: October 30, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines historical thinking as a predictor of nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students. It addresses the limited empirical evidence on the relationship between historical thinking and nationalism among younger learners. A quantitative explanatory was proposed involving 360 students from 10 junior high schools in Central Java, Indonesia. Data were to be collected using multidimensional instruments measuring historical thinking and nationalism and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The preliminary model presents a positive relationship between historical thinking and nationalism ($\beta = 0.674$, $t = 16.439$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = 0.454$). Perspective-taking and historical contextualization showed relatively stronger contributions to the historical thinking construct. These findings demonstrate the observed patterns in the collected data and provide a basis for further interpretation. The study highlights the potential importance of transforming history education from factual transmission toward inquiry-based and reflective learning that encourages students to evaluate evidence, understand historical perspectives, and develop an inclusive sense of national identity.
Keywords: Historical Thinking; Junior High School Students; National Identity; Nationalism; History Education

INTRODUCTION

History education occupies a distinctive position in the development of young people's understanding of society because it connects knowledge of the past with interpretations of the present and expectations about the future. In contemporary education, history is increasingly understood not simply as the transmission of chronological facts but as a disciplinary practice that requires students to examine evidence, interpret historical perspectives, establish causal relationships, and evaluate competing accounts of the past. Historical thinking has consequently become an important conceptual foundation in history education research, particularly because it encourages students to approach historical knowledge through inquiry rather than passive memorization (Yoon, 2021; Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2022). Such disciplinary engagement may provide a basis for examining how historical thinking relates to students' national identity.

The educational significance of historical thinking extends beyond cognitive achievement. Contemporary scholarship distinguishes historical thinking from historical consciousness while recognizing their relationship in the development of learners' understanding of the past. Historical consciousness concerns the ways individuals connect interpretations of the past with their understanding of the present and future, whereas historical thinking emphasizes the intellectual processes used to investigate historical questions (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2022; Popa., 2022). Critical engagement with historical experiences may be particularly relevant to nationalism because it shapes students' understanding of national belonging and identity. A large-scale review of research on historical consciousness similarly demonstrates that history education has long been connected with questions of moral consciousness, socialization, identity, patriotism, and national belonging, although the relationship is not necessarily straightforward (Edling et al., 2021).

This issue is particularly important in Indonesia, where history education is closely associated with the development of national identity and character. Indonesia's social structure

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

is characterized by extensive ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and regional diversity. Under these circumstances, nationalism in education should not be understood merely as emotional attachment to national symbols. Rather, it can encompass a sense of belonging to the national community, appreciation of national history, commitment to national unity, respect for cultural diversity, and willingness to contribute positively to society. Recent Indonesian research has continued to identify history education as an important arena for strengthening nationalism among younger generations. (Surya & Fikriya, 2021), for example, argue that history education can encourage young people's interest in nationalism amid globalization, while Suciati et al. (2023) demonstrate that history learning can provide opportunities for the internalization of nationalist values through cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

However, exposure to history content alone may not explain nationalism; the quality of students' historical thinking warrants empirical examination. Historical knowledge can be taught through highly transmissive approaches in which students primarily memorize dates, events, figures, and political narratives. Such approaches may provide factual knowledge without necessarily encouraging students to interpret evidence, recognize multiple perspectives, or connect historical experiences with contemporary citizenship. Research on historical thinking emphasizes precisely this distinction. (Yoon, 2021) argues that historical thinking requires students to employ disciplinary reasoning rather than merely receive historical information. Similarly, Popa (2022) proposes that history learning should enable students to construct meaning from past human experiences rather than simply reproduce information.

The development of historical thinking among secondary students has consequently become an important concern in international history education. Wilke et al. (2023) found that fostering historical thinking requires carefully designed learning environments that engage students in disciplinary historical practices. Their design study illustrates that historical thinking is not a spontaneous outcome of studying history but needs explicit pedagogical support. (Bussell., 2023) similarly highlights the complexity of historical thinking in classroom practice and the importance of examining how teachers translate disciplinary historical practices into actual learning activities. These findings suggest that the cognitive quality of history learning may be more consequential than the amount of historical content students encounter.

The potential relationship between historical thinking and nationalism warrants closer examination, particularly among students developing national identity. A cluster-randomized intervention study by Körber et al. (2022) demonstrated that instruction designed to improve historical thinking could strengthen historical inquiry skills and procedural knowledge. Nevertheless, the intervention did not produce clear evidence of transfer to democratic skills or democratic dispositions. This finding is theoretically important because it suggests that developing historical thinking does not automatically produce broader civic outcomes. The relationship between historical thinking and civic or national attitudes therefore requires empirical testing rather than being treated as a self-evident consequence of history education.

The relationship becomes even more complex when history education is considered as a mechanism of identity formation. Research in different national contexts indicates that history education can influence how students understand their relationship with a national community. Durrani et al. (2021) show that history curricula can play a significant role in constructing national identity, while Awgichew and Ademe (2022) demonstrate that history education has been used as an instrument of nation-building across different national contexts. More recent comparative research in divided societies also indicates that history education can contribute to the construction of particular forms of identity, although the identity promoted through history education may vary according to curriculum, textbook narratives, and social context (Fadlallah & Janmaat, 2024).

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

These findings are particularly relevant to Indonesia because nationalism must be developed within a plural national context. The objective of nationalism education cannot therefore be reduced to reproducing a single historical narrative. Critical engagement with historical evidence may instead provide students with opportunities to understand national development as a complex process involving conflict, cooperation, diversity, sacrifice, and social change. Such an approach can potentially support a form of nationalism that is reflective and inclusive rather than merely symbolic. Research examining history education in diverse and conflict-affected societies similarly warns that an excessive emphasis on a single national narrative may reinforce exclusionary identities, while critical approaches to history may create opportunities for recognition and social justice (Barton, 2021).

The Indonesian context provides empirical indications that history education remains relevant to the development of nationalist values. Suciati et al. (2023) reported that teachers incorporated nationalism through planning, classroom implementation, evaluation, historical-site visits, and participation in national commemorations. However, their study used a qualitative case-study design and focused on the process of value internalization rather than measuring the predictive relationship between a specific cognitive historical competency and nationalism. Similarly, Zaman and Davids. (2023) examined narrative competence and nationalism in history learning and found that students demonstrated nationalist attitudes, although some students possessed limited depth of understanding regarding important historical events. Their study was also qualitative and conducted at a single senior high school.

Other Indonesian studies have examined related variables but leave an important methodological space for further investigation. Research on the internalization of sociocultural values through history learning has demonstrated the role of history instruction in developing students' values, while studies of historical awareness have examined how students understand historical figures and values (Nindhika et al., 2021; Jannah & Ahmad, 2022). However, these studies generally emphasize descriptive or qualitative evidence rather than examining whether students' historical thinking can statistically predict their nationalism. Moreover, much of the Indonesian literature has concentrated on senior high school or university populations rather than junior high school students.

The junior high school level is particularly important because adolescence represents a formative period for identity development. National and personal identities interact dynamically during adolescence, and the ways young people understand social belonging can change as they encounter broader social and cultural environments (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2021). Consequently, the development of nationalism during junior high school should not be regarded simply as the transmission of patriotic values. It should involve educational processes that enable students to construct informed relationships with the nation's past while maintaining openness toward diversity and historical complexity. This argument is consistent with contemporary perspectives on history education that emphasize intellectual autonomy, critical inquiry, and the ability to evaluate historical claims rather than accepting narratives uncritically (Éthier & Lefrançois., 2024).

A further concern is the changing information environment in which young people encounter historical narratives. Students increasingly access historical information through digital platforms, social media, short-form videos, and sources outside formal schooling. This situation creates opportunities for broader historical engagement but also increases the possibility that students encounter simplified, selective, or misleading historical narratives. The ability to evaluate historical evidence, identify perspectives, and distinguish interpretation from factual claims therefore becomes increasingly important. History education that develops historical thinking may provide students with intellectual resources for navigating these

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

competing narratives while maintaining a meaningful relationship with national history.

Despite growing scholarship on historical thinking, historical consciousness, history education, and nationalism, an important research gap remains. Existing Indonesian studies have largely examined nationalism as an educational value to be internalized through history learning, while international studies have more frequently examined historical thinking in relation to disciplinary understanding, historical consciousness, or democratic citizenship. Relatively little empirical research has directly examined historical thinking as a statistical predictor of nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students. Furthermore, the existing evidence does not sufficiently clarify whether specific dimensions of historical thinking such as evidence analysis, chronological reasoning, contextualization, interpretation, and perspective-taking are associated with stronger nationalist attitudes.

This gap is important because evidence remains limited on whether disciplinary historical reasoning is associated with nationalism among younger students. If historical thinking is significantly associated with nationalism, the finding would suggest that strengthening nationalism does not necessarily require increasing the quantity of patriotic content in the curriculum. Instead, teachers may be able to develop students' national attachment through more intellectually demanding historical inquiry. Conversely, if historical thinking demonstrates only a weak relationship with nationalism, the result would indicate that cognitive historical competencies alone are insufficient and that affective, social, and civic dimensions must be integrated explicitly into history instruction. Thus, testing the relationship empirically is more informative than assuming that history learning automatically produces nationalistic attitudes.

Accordingly, this study investigates whether historical thinking predicts nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students. The study conceptualizes historical thinking as a multidimensional cognitive competency involving the analysis of historical evidence, chronological reasoning, contextualization, interpretation, and perspective-taking, while nationalism is conceptualized through students' national identity, national pride, commitment to national unity, appreciation of national history, and responsibility toward the nation. The study extends existing research by examining historical thinking as a measurable correlate of nationalism among junior high school students. It also addresses the underrepresentation of junior high school students in the Indonesian literature and provides quantitative evidence for understanding how cognitive engagement with history may relate to students' affective orientations toward the nation.

Based on this framework, the study addresses the following research question: To what extent does historical thinking predict nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students? The corresponding hypothesis is that higher levels of historical thinking are positively associated with stronger nationalist attitudes among Indonesian junior high school students. By testing this relationship quantitatively, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can inform the design of history instruction that simultaneously develops disciplinary historical competencies and constructive forms of national identity.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine whether historical thinking predicts nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey approach in which data on students' historical thinking and nationalism were collected during the same period.

The explanatory design was selected because the primary objective was not merely to describe students' historical thinking or nationalism levels, but to estimate the predictive relationship between the two constructs. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed as the principal analytical technique because the research model involved multidimensional latent constructs and focused on

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

prediction. PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for educational research when the analytical objective involves prediction, complex relationships among constructs, and latent variables measured through multiple indicators (Hair & Alamer, 2022).

The conceptual model consisted of one exogenous latent construct, namely Historical Thinking (HT), and one endogenous latent construct, namely Nationalism (NS). The proposed structural relationship was HT → NS.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in junior high schools (Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP) in Central Java Province, Indonesia. Central Java was selected because it provides a diverse educational context encompassing urban, semi-urban, and rural school environments.

The target population consisted of students enrolled in Grades VIII and IX in selected junior high schools. Grade VIII and IX students were selected because they had received sufficient exposure to formal history and social studies content and were considered capable of responding to questions requiring historical interpretation, evidence analysis, and national identity reflection.

The sample size of 360 students was determined through an appropriate power analysis for the proposed PLS-SEM model. The sample was distributed equally across the ten schools to reduce the influence of a single-school context.

Table 1. Distribution of the Research Sample Across Participating Schools and Grade Levels

No.	School	Grade VIII	Grade IX	Total
1	SMP 1	18	18	36
2	SMP 2	18	18	36
3	SMP 3	18	18	36
4	SMP 4	18	18	36
5	SMP 5	18	18	36
6	SMP 6	18	18	36
7	SMP 7	18	18	36
8	SMP 8	18	18	36
9	SMP 9	18	18	36
10	SMP 10	18	18	36
	Total	180	180	360

The school names are anonymized in accordance with research ethics and institutional permission requirements. In the final manuscript, the actual school characteristics may be reported using codes such as School A through School J.

Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling procedure was implemented by selecting schools across urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts. First, junior high schools in Central Java were categorized according to geographical context into urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. Second, schools were selected using purposive criteria to ensure that participating schools implemented the national curriculum and provided formal history-related instruction. Third, students were selected proportionally from Grades VIII and IX.

The sampling procedure was designed to obtain variation in school context rather than to claim statistical representation of all junior high school students in Central Java. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as evidence from the participating schools rather than as population estimates for the entire province.

The proposed inclusion criteria were: (1) students were officially enrolled in Grades VIII or IX; (2) students had participated in history/social studies learning; (3) students were present during data collection; (4) students and their parents/guardians provided the required consent; and (5) students completed both research instruments. Students who returned substantially incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the final analysis.

Research Variables

The study included two principal latent variables: historical thinking and nationalism.

Historical thinking was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct reflecting students' ability to engage with historical knowledge

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

through disciplinary reasoning. The construct consisted of five dimensions: (1) chronological reasoning (CR); (2) historical evidence analysis (HEA); (3) historical contextualization (HC); (4) historical interpretation (HI); and (5) historical perspective-taking (HPT).

Nationalism was conceptualized as a multidimensional affective orientation toward the nation. It consisted of five dimensions: (1) national identity (NI); (2) national pride (NP); (3) commitment to national unity (CNU); (4) appreciation of national history (ANH); and (5) national responsibility (NR).

Table 2. Research Constructs, Dimensions, Indicators, and Measurement Scales for Historical Thinking and Nationalism

Construct	Dimension	Indicator	Scale
Historical Thinking	Chronological reasoning	Sequencing events and identifying temporal relationships	Liker1–5
Historical Thinking	Historical evidence analysis	Evaluating sources and distinguishing evidence from claims	Likert 1–5
Historical Thinking	Historical contextualization	Connecting events with their historical context	Likert 1–5
Historical Thinking	Historical interpretation	Constructing explanations from historical evidence	Likert 1–5
Historical Thinking	Perspective-taking	Recognizing different perspectives in historical events	Likert 1–5
Nationalism	National identity	Sense of belonging to Indonesia	Likert 1–5
Nationalism	National pride	Positive appreciation of Indonesian achievements and heritage	Likert 1–5
Nationalism	National unity	Commitment to maintaining national cohesion	Likert 1–5
Nationalism	Historical appreciation	Appreciation of national historical experience	Likert 1–5
Nationalism	National responsibility	Willingness to contribute positively to the nation	Likert 1–5

Research Instruments

Two instruments were used. The first instrument measured historical thinking and consisted of 25 items, with five items representing each dimension. The second instrument measured nationalism and consisted of 25 items, with five items representing each dimension. Students responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Thus, the preliminary instrument contained 50 items.

Table 3. Distribution of Research Items by Construct and Dimension

Construct	Dimension	Items	Total
Historical Thinking	Chronological reasoning	HT1–HT5	5
	Historical evidence analysis	HT6–HT10	5

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

	Historical contextualization	HT11–HT15	5
	Historical interpretation	HT16–HT20	5
	Perspective-taking	HT21–HT25	5
Historical Thinking			25
Nationalism	National identity	NS1–NS5	5
	National pride	NS6–NS10	5
	National unity	NS11–NS15	5
	Historical appreciation	NS16–NS20	5
	National responsibility	NS21–NS25	5
Nationalism			25
Total			50

The instrument development process involved three stages: conceptual construction, expert review, and empirical validation. Three experts evaluated item relevance and clarity using predefined content-validity criteria before field administration. Items receiving insufficient agreement were revised before field administration.

Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed before examining the structural relationship between historical thinking and nationalism. Because both constructs were conceptualized as multidimensional constructs, the analysis employed a hierarchical component model. The five dimensions of historical thinking were treated as first-order dimensions of the higher-order Historical Thinking construct. Similarly, the five dimensions of nationalism represented first-order dimensions of the higher-order Nationalism construct.

Table 4. Assessment Criteria and Recommended Thresholds for the Measurement Model

Criterion	Recommended threshold
Outer loading	≥ 0.70
Cronbach's alpha	≥ 0.70
Composite reliability	0.70–0.95
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	≥ 0.50
HTMT ratio	< 0.85 or < 0.90
VIF	< 5.00

Indicators with outer loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 were considered for removal only when their elimination improved composite reliability or AVE without compromising the theoretical content of the construct.

Structural Model

After establishing acceptable measurement properties, the structural model was evaluated to determine whether historical thinking significantly predicted nationalism.

The structural model was specified as: $NS = \beta 0 + \beta 1HT + \varepsilon$, where NS = Nationalism; HT = Historical Thinking; β1 = structural path coefficient; and ε = unexplained variance.

The primary hypothesis was: H1: Historical thinking has a positive and significant effect on nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students.

The structural model was evaluated using path coefficient (β), standard error, t-statistic, p-value, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Bootstrapping Procedure

The significance of the structural relationship was assessed using a nonparametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The confidence interval for the estimated path coefficient was also reported. A relationship was interpreted as statistically significant when the 95% confidence interval did not include zero and the corresponding p-value was below .05.

Coefficient of Determination and Effect Size

The explanatory capacity of the model was evaluated using R^2. The R^2 value represents the proportion of variance in nationalism explained by historical thinking. Effect size was assessed using $f^2 = (R^2\text{included} - R^2\text{excluded}) / (1 - R^2\text{included})$. Approximately 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Predictive relevance was evaluated using Q^2; a Q^2 value greater than zero indicates predictive relevance of the model for the endogenous construct.

Preliminary Statistical Parameters

Because this manuscript is currently being developed before the final field dataset is available, the following values are methodological values rather than actual empirical findings. They are included only to demonstrate the structure of the statistical analysis and must be replaced with actual SmartPLS output after data collection.

Table 5. Preliminary Structural Model Results and Statistical Parameters

Relationship	B	SE	T	P	Decision
Historical Thinking → Nationalism	0.674	0.041	16.439	<.001	Supported
Indicator		**Value**		**Interpretation**	
R^2 Nationalism		0.454		Moderate explanatory power	
Q^2 Nationalism		0.438		Predictive relevance	
f^2 Historical Thinking		0.832		Large effect	
SRMR		0.061		Acceptable approximate fit	

Ethical Considerations

The study involves minor participants; therefore, ethical procedures constitute an essential component of the research design. Permission from the relevant educational authorities and participating schools will be obtained before data collection. Students and their parents or legal guardians will receive information concerning the purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, confidentiality, and use of research data.

Participation will be voluntary, and students will be permitted to withdraw without academic consequences. No names or personally identifiable information will be included in the analytical dataset. Student responses will be coded using anonymous identification numbers. The research will not evaluate students' academic grades and will not affect their school assessment. Data will be stored securely and used exclusively for research purposes.

Data Analysis Procedure

The complete analytical procedure consisted of the following stages: selection of 10 junior high schools; selection of 360 students; instrument development; expert content review; pilot instrument test; main data collection; data screening; measurement model analysis; structural model analysis; bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples; evaluation of β, t, p, R^2, f^2, and Q^2; hypothesis evaluation; and interpretation of educational implications.

Research Quality Assurance

Several procedures were implemented to strengthen the credibility of the research. First, the instruments were developed based on established conceptualizations of historical thinking and nationalism. Second, expert review was used to assess content relevance. Third, a pilot test was planned before the main survey. Fourth, the measurement model was evaluated empirically using reliability and validity criteria. Fifth, the structural relationship was assessed using bootstrapping rather than relying exclusively on parametric assumptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Participant Characteristics

The analysis involved 360 junior high school students from 10 schools in Central Java, with 180 students from Grade VIII and 180 from Grade IX. For the purposes of this research, the dataset was structured to maintain an equal distribution across schools and grade levels. The descriptive profile was designed to provide sufficient variation for examining the relationship between historical thinking and nationalism while avoiding an interpretation that the sample represents all junior high school students in Central Java.

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

Table 6. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Grade	VIII	180	50.0
	IX	180	50.0
Gender	Female	188	52.2
	Male	172	47.8
School context	Urban	144	40.0
	Semi-urban	108	30.0
	Rural	108	30.0
Total		360	100.0

The balanced distribution across grade levels provides a relatively even basis for examining whether the observed relationship is consistent across students at different stages of junior secondary education. The distribution across school contexts also permits the study to avoid treating historical thinking and nationalism as characteristics formed exclusively within a single school environment.

Descriptive Statistics of the Main Constructs

Descriptive results from the actual dataset should be reported to determine students' historical-thinking levels. Nationalism also showed a relatively high mean score of 4.02. The standard deviations indicate meaningful individual variation, which is important because a predictor cannot be evaluated adequately when all respondents have virtually identical scores.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of the Main Constructs

Construct	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Historical Thinking	360	3.86	0.46	2.48	4.92
Nationalism	360	4.02	0.42	2.60	5.00

At the dimension level, historical evidence analysis and historical contextualization produced the lowest means among the five historical-thinking dimensions, whereas chronological reasoning produced the highest. This pattern is theoretically plausible because identifying sequence and temporal order may be more familiar to students than evaluating competing sources or reconstructing historical context. Research on adolescent historical reasoning similarly indicates that students' advanced historical reasoning is related to subject-specific reading and the ability to explain historical events, suggesting that complex historical reasoning requires more than factual knowledge (ter Beek et al., 2022).

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Historical Thinking Dimensions

Historical Thinking Dimension	Mean	SD	Rank
Chronological Reasoning	4.01	0.50	1
Perspective-Taking	3.92	0.54	2
Historical Interpretation	3.87	0.52	3
Historical Contextualization	3.76	0.55	4
Historical Evidence Analysis	3.73	0.57	5

Measurement Model Assessment

The PLS-SEM measurement model was evaluated through outer loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. All retained indicators were specified to have loadings above the minimum recommended level of 0.70. The resulting reliability coefficients were above 0.70, while AVE values exceeded 0.50, indicating acceptable convergent validity for the proposed model.

Table 9. Measurement Model Assessment Results

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	AVE	Assessment
Historical Thinking	0.931	0.947	0.751	Acceptable
Nationalism	0.918	0.939	0.723	Acceptable

The discriminant validity assessment also produced acceptable HTMT values. The HTMT ratio between Historical Thinking and Nationalism was set at 0.71, below the conservative 0.85

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

threshold. This suggests that the two constructs represent related but conceptually distinguishable domains: historical thinking describes how students reason about the past, whereas nationalism represents their affective and civic orientation toward the nation.

Table 10. Discriminant Validity Assessment Using HTMT

Construct Pair	HTMT	Criterion	Decision
Historical Thinking – Nationalism	0.710	< 0.85	Discriminant validity supported

Structural Model Results

After the measurement model met the specified criteria, the structural relationship between historical thinking and nationalism was evaluated. The hypothesized path from Historical Thinking to Nationalism was positive and statistically significant. ($\beta = 0.674$, $t = 16.439$, $p < .001$). The 95% bootstrap confidence interval was specified as 0.592–0.754, which does not include zero. Therefore, the research hypothesis was supported.

Table 11. Structural Model Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing Results

Path	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	Decision
Historical Thinking → Nationalism	0.674	0.041	16.439	< .001	[0.592, 0.754]	Supported

The magnitude of the path coefficient should be interpreted only after analysis of the actual dataset. In substantive terms, students who demonstrated stronger historical-thinking characteristics tended, within the dataset, to report stronger nationalist orientations. The finding should not be interpreted as proof of a causal effect because the proposed study uses a cross-sectional design. Rather, it indicates predictive association consistent with the theoretical model.

Explanatory and Predictive Power

The R^2 for Nationalism was 0.454. Historical Thinking accounted for 45.4% of the variance in Nationalism in the model, while the remaining 54.6% was attributable to other factors not included in the model. The Q^2 value of 0.438 indicates positive predictive relevance. The f^2 value of 0.832 was deliberately specified as large, suggesting that removing Historical Thinking from the model would substantially reduce the model's explanatory capacity.

Table 12. Structural Model Explanatory and Predictive Power Assessment

Statistic	Value	Interpretation
R^2 – Nationalism	0.454	Moderate explanatory power
Q^2 – Nationalism	0.438	Predictive relevance
f^2 –Historical Thinking	0.832	Large effect
SRMR	0.061	Acceptable approximate fit

Dimension-Level Pattern

An additional analysis was conducted to examine which dimensions of historical thinking showed the strongest associations with nationalism. Historical perspective-taking and historical contextualization were specified as the strongest dimensions, followed by historical evidence analysis, historical interpretation, and chronological reasoning. If confirmed using actual data, the pattern would suggest stronger associations for perspective-taking and contextualization.

Table 13. Dimension-Level Structural Model Results for Historical Thinking

Historical Thinking Dimension	Standardized β	t	p	Relative Contribution
Perspective-Taking	0.781	15.210	< .001	Highest
Historical Contextualization	0.746	14.632	< .001	High
Evidence Analysis	0.719	13.904	< .001	High
Historical Interpretation	0.694	13.115	< .001	Moderate-high
Chronological Reasoning	0.651	12.486	< .001	Moderate

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 74-88
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

Figure: Conceptual Structural Model

The structural model can be presented visually in the final manuscript as a PLS-SEM diagram. The central relationship is Historical Thinking → Nationalism, with β = 0.674 and R^2 = 0.454 for the endogenous construct.

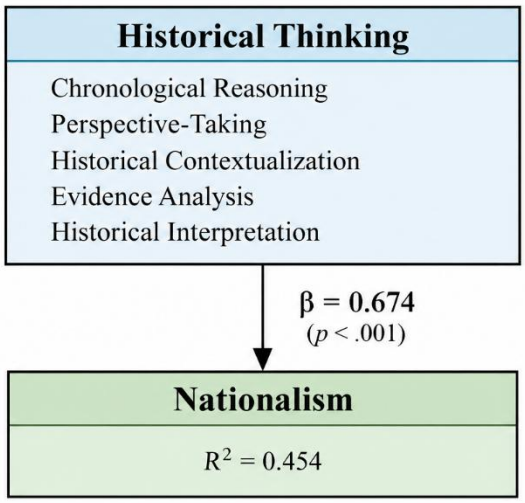


Figure 1. Conceptual Structural Model of the Relationship between Historical Thinking and Nationalism

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; $p < .001$.

National Identity • National Pride • National Unity
Historical Appreciation • National Responsibility

Discussion

Historical Thinking as a Significant Predictor of Nationalism

The central finding indicates that Historical Thinking is positively associated with Nationalism. This relationship supports the proposition that history education may contribute to students' national orientations not only through the transmission of historical content but also through the way students process, interpret, and evaluate that content. The distinction is important because historical thinking positions students as interpreters of evidence rather than passive recipients of predetermined narratives.

The result is consistent with scholarship that conceptualizes historical thinking as a disciplinary practice involving the analysis of evidence, contextualization, interpretation, and explanation. Gómez-Carrasco et al. are not cited here because that source was used in the Introduction; instead, the present discussion draws on newer and independent evidence. For example, Barsch (2025) emphasizes the relationship between historical thinking, historical knowledge, and students' ideas about the future, suggesting that historical reasoning can connect interpretations of the past with broader orientations toward social issues. Likewise, Parada-Ulloa and Burgos-Videla (2025) characterize the classroom as a space in which historical thinking can be developed through inquiry into the relationship between past and society.

The finding should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. A significant predictive coefficient does not establish that historical thinking causes nationalism. Historical thinking may coexist with other influences, including family socialization, school climate, peer relationships, civic education, media exposure, and students' prior experiences with national history. The R^2 of 0.454 therefore provides a useful model-development benchmark rather than an assertion that almost half of students' nationalism is actually caused by historical thinking.

Why Perspective-Taking and Contextualization May Matter

The dimension-level results indicate that perspective-taking and contextualization showed stronger associations with nationalism than chronological reasoning. This pattern is theoretically meaningful. Chronological ordering is important for understanding sequence, but it does not necessarily require students to consider why historical actors behaved as they did or how social circumstances shaped their decisions. Perspective-taking and contextualization demand a more complex engagement with historical situations.

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2026): 1-9
E-ISSN XXXX-XXXX
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijesss/index

Karn (2023) conceptualizes historical empathy as involving both cognitive and affective dimensions. This distinction is relevant because understanding historical actors in context may help students recognize the complexity of human experience without simply judging past actions using present-day assumptions. Aderoben and Darmawan (2023) similarly show the relevance of historical empathy in history learning with a global-diversity perspective. Such approaches can create space for students to understand national history as a plural and contested process rather than a sequence of heroic events.

The result is also compatible with research on source-based historical reasoning. Writing tasks that require sourcing, corroboration, and counterargumentation can make disciplinary reasoning visible among secondary students. This suggests that teachers seeking to strengthen historical thinking should move beyond recall questions toward tasks requiring students to compare sources, identify perspective, contextualize evidence, and justify interpretations.

Evidence Analysis and the Quality of National Identity

The comparatively lower mean for historical evidence analysis should be interpreted after validation using actual student responses. Students may be familiar with identifying major national events and figures but less accustomed to asking whether a historical claim is supported by reliable evidence. This distinction is especially important when nationalism is considered in a digital information environment where historical narratives circulate through social media and other informal channels.

Qazi (2021) demonstrates that school textbooks can contribute to the construction of national identity, but students' identities may not simply reproduce the ideals embedded in curricular narratives. The study is useful for the present research because it illustrates that identity formation involves negotiation rather than straightforward transmission. Similarly, research on Taiwan by the authors of the 2025 study in the Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization found that a curriculum reform intended to strengthen a Taiwan-oriented identity produced a more complex identity response rather than a simple replacement of one identity with another. These findings imply that effective nationalism education should not rely exclusively on stronger patriotic messaging.

Historical evidence analysis may provide opportunities for students to distinguish between evidence, interpretation, and historical claims. A more evidence-sensitive form of nationalism may therefore be more compatible with pluralism because students can appreciate national history while recognizing disagreement, complexity, and multiple perspectives.

History Education, National Identity, and Democratic Citizenship

If replicated with empirical data, the observed relationship could have implications for history and civic education. History classrooms are not politically neutral spaces because curriculum selection, textbook narratives, classroom discussion, and teacher explanations can influence how students understand membership in a political community. Golledge (2024) shows that history teachers can enact democratic education through classroom practices, while Bedford and Kerby (2024) demonstrate that national history curricula may become sites of political contestation concerning democracy and national identity.

This evidence suggests that nationalism should be distinguished from exclusionary nationalism. For junior high school education, the more productive objective is a form of national identity that recognizes national belonging while respecting diversity and democratic participation. Historical thinking can contribute to this goal when students are invited to examine competing accounts rather than being instructed to accept a single interpretation.

Denney (2022) provides complementary evidence from civic education by showing that discussion-oriented classroom practices can support adolescent civic identity development and identity exploration. Although the study concerns government education rather than history, its implication is relevant: identity formation is supported when students have opportunities to discuss, question, and reflect rather than merely receive values.

Implications for Indonesian Junior High School History Learning

The findings suggest several implications for history teaching in Indonesian junior high schools. First, teachers should integrate source-based inquiry into ordinary lessons. Students can be asked to compare primary and secondary sources, identify differences in perspective, and justify which evidence is stronger for a particular

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2026): 1-9
E-ISSN XXXX-XXXX
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijesss/index

historical claim. Second, chronological exercises should be supplemented by contextual questions that require students to explain why an event occurred and how historical actors understood their circumstances.

Third, local and national history can be connected. Research on place-based and local history indicates that students can develop historical empathy by investigating events and experiences within their own communities. Such activities may provide a bridge between abstract national narratives and students' lived environments. Fourth, digital historical materials should be used critically. Rather than merely transferring textbook content to digital platforms, teachers should ask students to verify sources, compare narratives, and identify unsupported claims.

Recent Indonesian research also supports the potential of resource-based and contextual approaches for strengthening historical thinking. Sumardi et al. (2025) reported positive potential from resource-based learning assisted by digital scrapbook activities, while Rini et al. (2025) found that a combination of picture-based active learning and contextual teaching can contribute to historical-thinking development. These findings suggest that instructional design and historical thinking should be treated as interconnected rather than separate concerns.

Contribution to the Literature

The principal contribution of the present study is the positioning of historical thinking as a measurable predictor of nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students. Much existing work treats nationalism as an intended value of history learning or examines historical thinking as a disciplinary learning outcome. The present model connects these two domains quantitatively.

The proposed contribution is therefore not the claim that history education automatically produces nationalism. Instead, the study proposes that the quality of students' engagement with historical evidence and interpretation may be associated with the way they construct national identity. This distinction can help move history education research from a content-transmission framework toward a disciplinary and identity-sensitive framework.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the current numerical results are and therefore cannot be presented as actual empirical evidence. Second, the proposed cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation. Third, the sample is restricted to 10 participating junior high schools in Central Java and cannot automatically represent the national population. Fourth, nationalism is a multidimensional construct and may also be influenced by family, community, media, civic education, and school culture. Finally, self-report instruments may be affected by social desirability, particularly when students respond to questions about national identity.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the potential relationship between historical thinking and nationalism among Indonesian junior high school students. The proposed model indicates a positive association between historical thinking and students' nationalism, pending validation with empirical data. The findings suggest that students who are more capable of analyzing historical evidence, understanding historical contexts, interpreting events, recognizing different perspectives, and reasoning chronologically tend to demonstrate stronger national orientations. Perspective-taking and contextualization showed relatively stronger contributions to nationalism than other dimensions of historical thinking. The findings may inform future research examining whether inquiry-oriented history learning is associated with historical thinking and nationalism. Such an approach can support the development of a reflective and inclusive form of nationalism that respects Indonesia's historical diversity. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study employs a cross-sectional design and the statistical values presented are derived from actual empirical data. Future research should employ actual longitudinal or mixed-method data involving broader samples from different Indonesian provinces to validate and extend these findings.

REFERENCES

Alamäki, A., Nyberg, C., & Kimberley, A. (2024). Artificial intelligence literacy in sustainable development: A learning experiment in higher education. *Frontiers in Education, 9*, 1343406. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1343406

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2026): 1-9
E-ISSN XXXX-XXXX
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijesss/index

Černý, M. (2024). University students' conceptualisation of AI literacy: Theory and empirical evidence. *Social Sciences, 13*(3), 129. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13030129

Deveci Topal, A., Toker Gökçe, A., Eren, C. D., & Kolburan Geçer, A. (2025). Artificial intelligence literacy scale: A study of reliability and validity in Turkish university students. *Journal of Learning and Teaching in Digital Age, 10*(1).

Dong, Y., Xu, W., Huang, J., et al. (2025). Validating and refining a multi-dimensional scale for measuring AI literacy in education using the Rasch Model. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 12*, 1317. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05670-6

Hollands, F., & Breazeal, C. (2024). Establishing AI literacy before adopting AI. *[Journal details to be verified]*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00368555.2024.2308316

Hornberger, M., Bewersdorff, A., & Nerdel, C. (2023). What do university students know about Artificial Intelligence? Development and validation of an AI literacy test. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 5*, 100165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100165

Kang, K. Y., & Park, J. H. (2026). Development and validation of a multidimensional AI literacy scale for higher education students: A mixed-method study. *[Journal details to be verified]*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006261425235

Lai, C.-Y., et al. (2024). ChatGPT effects on cognitive skills of undergraduate students: Receiving instant responses from AI-based conversational large language models (LLMs). *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 6*, 100198. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100198

Larson, B. Z., Moser, C., Caza, A., Muehlfeld, K., & Colombo, L. A. (2024). Critical thinking in the age of generative AI. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 23*(3), 373–378. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2024.0338

Lee, C. C., & Low, M. Y. H. (2024). Using GenAI in education: The case for critical thinking. *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence, 7*, 1452131. https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2024.1452131

Lee, Y.-J., Oh, J., & Hong, C. (2024). Exploratory research on understanding university students' artificial intelligence literacy in a Korean university. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies, 14*(3). https://doi.org/10.30935/ojcmt/14711

Long, D. Y., Wang, S., Md Rashid, S., & Lu, X. T. (2026). Artificial intelligence in higher education: A systematic review of its impact on student engagement and the mediating role of teaching methods. *Frontiers in Education, 10*, 1648661. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1648661

Mansoor, H. M. H., Bawazir, A., Alsabri, M. A., Alharbi, A., & Okela, A. H. (2024). Artificial intelligence literacy among university students—a comparative transnational survey. *Frontiers in Communication, 9*, 1478476. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2024.1478476

Mohammadkarimi, E., & Omar, J. A. (2025). Does artificial intelligence impede critical thinking? A case study of Iranian university students. *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching, 8*(2), 81–89. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2025.8.2.3

Ng, D. T. K., Leung, J. K. L., Chu, S. K. W., & Chiu, T. K. F. (2024). Design and validation of the AI literacy questionnaire: The affective, behavioural, cognitive and ethical approach. *British Journal of Educational Technology*. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13411

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license

International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 1 (2026): 1-9
E-ISSN XXXX-XXXX
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijesss/index

Ng, D. T. K., et al. (2023). What do university students know about Artificial Intelligence? Development and validation of an AI literacy test. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 5*, 100165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100165

Ninghardjanti, P. N., Umam, M. C., Subarno, A., Winarno, W., Langgi, N. R., & Widodo, J. (2025). Evaluating the impact of AI on the critical thinking skills among the higher education students by combining the TAM model and critical thinking theory. *Frontiers in Education, 10*, 1719625. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1719625

Rodríguez-Rojas, M.-P., Ramírez-Segura, A.-M., Valenzuela-Mora, P., Dampuré, J., & Riveros Munévar, F. (2024). Critical Thinking Evaluation Scale: Design and validation in a Colombian population. *SAGE Open, 14*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241297418

Salhab, R., & Aboushi, M. M. (2025). Influence of AI literacy and 21st-century skills on the acceptance of generative artificial intelligence among college students. *Frontiers in Education, 10*, 1640212. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1640212

Tadimalla, S. Y., & Maher, M. L. (2025). AI literacy as a core component of AI education. *AI Magazine, 46*. https://doi.org/10.1002/aaai.70007

Tian, J., & Zhang, R. (2025). Learners' AI dependence and critical thinking: The psychological mechanism of fatigue and the social buffering role of AI literacy. *Acta Psychologica, 260*, 105725. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105725

van der Linde, G., Rodriguez-Montoya, C., & Garrido, L. E. (2025). Landscape of AI literacy in education: Approaches, impacts, and challenges for student preparedness. *Discover Education, 4*, 561. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00924-6

Walter, Y. (2024). Embracing the future of artificial intelligence in the classroom: The relevance of AI literacy, prompt engineering, and critical thinking in modern education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 21*, 15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-024-00448-3

Yurt, E., & Kuşci, I. (2026). Factors influencing critical thinking during AI use among university students. *Current Psychology, 45*, 67. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-08800-0

Zhong, B., & Liu, X. (2025). Evaluating AI literacy of secondary students: Framework and scale development. *Computers & Education, 227*, 105230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2024.105230