

Implementing Image-Based Media to Improve Social Studies Learning Outcomes on Indonesia's Foreign Policy: A Classroom Action Research Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to improve students' Social Studies learning outcomes on the topic of Indonesia's foreign policy through the implementation of image-based media in an Islamic elementary school classroom.

Methodology: This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model. The research involved 25 sixth-grade students. Data were collected using achievement tests, observation sheets, questionnaires, and interviews. Data analysis used descriptive statistics and percentage techniques to evaluate learning outcomes and classroom activities across two research cycles.

Main Findings: The results showed that students' mean scores improved from 38.26 to 65.52 in Cycle I and increased further to 80.50 in Cycle II. The percentage of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion rose from 48% to 60% in Cycle I and reached 92% in Cycle II. Student engagement and participation also improved significantly during the implementation.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study provides a specific application of image-based media in teaching Indonesia's foreign policy using a Classroom Action Research framework. It offers practical evidence on improving learning outcomes through visual media in Islamic elementary education. The study contributes to contextualized instructional strategies for abstract Social Studies topics at the primary education level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social Studies (IPS) is a fundamental subject in Islamic elementary schools as it plays a crucial role in developing students' understanding of social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of society. It integrates various disciplines such as history, geography, economics, and other social sciences into a unified learning experience [1], [2], [3]. Through Social Studies, students are expected to develop critical thinking, social awareness, and responsible citizenship. However, achieving these goals requires effective instructional strategies

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that actively engage students in the learning process [4], [5]. Therefore, the selection of appropriate learning media becomes an essential factor in enhancing students' learning outcomes.

In practice, many Social Studies learning activities still rely heavily on conventional teaching methods such as lectures, which tend to limit student participation. As a result, students often become passive, less motivated, and easily distracted during the learning process [6], [7]. This condition was also observed in an Islamic elementary school, where students showed low interest and engagement in learning Social Studies [8], [9]. Only a small number of students actively responded to questions, while others tended to talk with peers or lose focus. Consequently, students' learning outcomes did not meet the expected minimum competency standards.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of instructional media in improving students' engagement and learning outcomes. The use of visual media, particularly images, has been found to support students' understanding by providing concrete representations of abstract concepts [10]. Several researchers have reported that image-based media can increase students' motivation and participation in classroom activities. In addition, visual aids help students retain information more effectively compared to traditional lecture-based instruction [11], [12]. These findings indicate that integrating appropriate media into teaching practices can significantly enhance the quality of learning.

Despite these findings, there is still a gap in the application of image-based media in Social Studies learning, particularly in specific topics such as Indonesia's foreign policy. Many teachers have not optimally utilized visual media to support the delivery of complex and abstract content. Furthermore, limited classroom-based research focusing on practical implementation in Islamic elementary school contexts remains a challenge [13], [14]. As a result, the potential benefits of image-based media are not fully realized in improving students' learning outcomes [15], [16]. This gap highlights the need for more context-specific and action-oriented research.

Addressing this issue is important because improving students' learning outcomes requires innovative and engaging instructional approaches. Teachers are expected to create meaningful learning experiences that encourage active student participation [17], [18]. The use of image-based media can serve as an effective tool to stimulate students' interest and facilitate better understanding of learning materials. Moreover, it aligns with the demands of modern education, which emphasize interactive and student-centered learning [19], [20]. Therefore, exploring the effectiveness of such media is highly relevant in enhancing the quality of Social Studies education.

This study offers a novel contribution by focusing on the implementation of image-based media within a Classroom Action Research framework to improve students' learning outcomes on the topic of Indonesia's foreign policy. Unlike previous studies that are mostly general, this research specifically addresses a particular content area and educational context [21]. It also emphasizes a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection to continuously improve teaching practices. By combining practical intervention with systematic evaluation, this study provides empirical evidence for effective classroom strategies [22]. Thus, it contributes to both theoretical and practical advancements in Social Studies education at the elementary level.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to improve students' learning outcomes in Social Studies through the use of image-based media. CAR is a reflective process conducted by teachers to identify and solve classroom problems through systematic actions [23], [24]. The research followed a cyclical model consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection [25]. The study was conducted in two cycles, each designed to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the implemented instructional strategy. This approach allowed continuous refinement of teaching practices based on the results obtained in each cycle.

2.2. Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at an Islamic elementary school in Ciampea, Bogor, Indonesia. The participants of this study were 25 sixth-grade students enrolled in the Social Studies class. The researcher acted as both the teacher and the observer during the implementation of the study. This dual role enabled direct involvement in planning, executing, and evaluating the learning process. The selected participants represented a typical classroom context where learning outcomes in Social Studies needed improvement.

2.3. Research Procedures

The research procedures were carried out in two cycles, each consisting of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, lesson plans and instructional media based on images were prepared along with research instruments. During the action stage, the learning activities were implemented using image-based media to support students' understanding of Indonesia's foreign policy. Observation was

conducted simultaneously to record students' participation and engagement during the learning process. The reflection stage involved analyzing the results of each cycle to determine necessary improvements for the next cycle.

2.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using multiple techniques, including tests, observations, questionnaires, and interviews. Tests were used to measure students' cognitive learning outcomes before and after the implementation of the intervention. Observations were conducted to assess students' learning activities and teacher performance during the instructional process [26]. Questionnaires were distributed to capture students' responses and attitudes toward the use of image-based media. Interviews were conducted at the end of each cycle to gain deeper insights into students' learning experiences.

2.5. Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study included achievement tests, observation sheets, questionnaires, and interview guidelines. The achievement test consisted of multiple-choice questions designed to measure students' understanding of the subject matter [27]. Observation sheets were used to systematically record students' and teacher's activities during the learning process. The questionnaire contained several items to assess students' motivation and engagement in learning Social Studies. Interview guidelines were used to ensure consistency in collecting qualitative data from participants.

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Students' learning outcomes were analyzed by calculating the average scores and determining the percentage of students who achieved the minimum mastery criterion (≥ 65). Observation data were analyzed to identify patterns of student participation and engagement during the learning process. Questionnaire and interview data were analyzed qualitatively to support the quantitative findings. The results from each cycle were compared to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Table 1. Classroom Action Research Cycle Design

Cycle	Stage	Description
I	Planning	Preparing lesson plans, image-based media, and research instruments
	Action	Implementing learning activities using image-based media
	Observation	Recording students' participation and classroom interactions
	Reflection	Evaluating results and identifying improvements
II	Planning	Revising instructional strategies based on previous cycle results
	Action	Re-implementing improved learning strategies
	Observation	Monitoring changes in students' engagement and performance
	Reflection	Final evaluation of learning outcomes

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Cycle I Results

The implementation of image-based media in Cycle I was conducted in two meetings focusing on students' initial engagement and understanding of Indonesia's foreign policy concepts. During this cycle, students began to interact with visual materials such as political figures, parliamentary activities, and election processes. The learning process showed that students were more interested compared to conventional teaching methods, although participation was still limited to certain individuals. Some students were still passive, hesitant to ask questions, and less focused during observation activities. Overall, the results indicated a positive trend, but the learning outcomes had not yet reached the expected level of mastery. The improvement in students' learning outcomes in Cycle I can be seen in Table 2

Table 2. Students' Learning Outcomes in Cycle I

Indicator	Pre-test Post-test	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Lowest Score	25	35
Highest Score	65	85

Indicator	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean Score	38.26	65.52
Students Achieving KKM	12	15
Students Not Achieving KKM	13	10
Mastery Percentage	48%	60%

The data show that the mean score increased from 38.26 in the pre-test to 65.52 in the post-test. The percentage of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion (KKM) also improved from 48% to 60%. Despite this improvement, the results did not meet the success indicator of 85% mastery. Therefore, further improvements were necessary to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

In addition to learning outcomes, observations of teacher and student activities were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Teacher performance improved from 67.50% in the first meeting to 82.50% in the second meeting, with an overall average of 74.45% categorized as “good.” Meanwhile, student activity increased from 64.56% to 76.50%, with an average of 68.45%, categorized as “adequate.” However, several weaknesses were identified, including low student participation in discussions and limited engagement during observation activities. These findings became the basis for reflection and improvement in Cycle II.

3.2. Cycle II Results

Based on the reflection results from Cycle I, several improvements were implemented in Cycle II, including increased teacher guidance, enhanced student motivation, and more structured use of image-based media. The learning activities in this cycle showed significant improvement in student engagement, participation, and confidence. Students were more active in discussions, more willing to ask and answer questions, and more focused during observation activities. The use of visual media created a more interactive and meaningful learning environment. As a result, both learning outcomes and classroom participation improved substantially. The improvement in students’ learning outcomes in Cycle II is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students’ Learning Outcomes in Cycle II

Indicator	Pre-test	Post-test
Lowest Score	45	60
Highest Score	70	90
Mean Score	65.20	80.50
Students Achieving KKM	16	23
Students Not Achieving KKM	9	2
Mastery Percentage	65%	92%

The results indicate a significant increase in the mean score from 65.20 to 80.50. The percentage of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion increased to 92%, exceeding the predetermined success indicator of 85%. This demonstrates that the implementation of image-based media was effective in improving students’ learning outcomes. Furthermore, the number of students who did not meet the KKM decreased significantly from 9 to only 2 students.

Observations of classroom activities also showed notable improvements in Cycle II. Teacher performance reached 83.75% and was categorized as “very good,” indicating better classroom management and instructional delivery. Student activity increased to 86.66%, categorized as “very good,” reflecting higher engagement and participation. Students were more confident in expressing their ideas and actively involved in collaborative learning. These improvements confirm that the revised instructional strategies successfully addressed the limitations identified in Cycle I.

3.3. Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the implementation of image-based media significantly improved students’ learning outcomes and classroom engagement in Social Studies. The improvement can be seen in the increase of mean scores, mastery percentage, and student participation across cycles. The transition from passive to active learning behavior highlights the effectiveness of visual media in supporting conceptual understanding. The iterative process of Classroom Action Research allowed continuous refinement of teaching strategies. Therefore, image-based media can be considered an effective instructional approach in enhancing Social Studies learning outcomes.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of image-based media significantly improved students' learning outcomes in Social Studies. The increase in mean scores from Cycle I to Cycle II indicates a clear enhancement in students' understanding of Indonesia's foreign policy concepts. In addition, the percentage of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion increased substantially, exceeding the predetermined success indicator. This improvement reflects the effectiveness of visual learning in facilitating comprehension of abstract concepts. Therefore, the integration of image-based media can be considered a successful strategy in improving learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the results also revealed a notable improvement in students' classroom engagement and participation. During Cycle I, student involvement was still limited, with only a few students actively participating in discussions and question-and-answer sessions. However, in Cycle II, students became more confident, active, and collaborative during the learning process. The use of image-based media encouraged students to observe, discuss, and express their ideas more effectively. This shift from passive to active learning behavior indicates that the instructional approach successfully created a more student-centered learning environment.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of instructional media in enhancing learning outcomes. Visual media, particularly images, have been widely recognized as effective tools to support students' understanding and retention of information [28]. Previous research has shown that image-based learning can increase students' motivation and engagement in classroom activities. In addition, visual representations help bridge the gap between abstract concepts and real-life contexts. Thus, the results of this study support existing theories that highlight the role of media in improving the quality of learning.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on the topic of Indonesia's foreign policy within a Classroom Action Research framework. Unlike many previous studies that examine general Social Studies topics, this research provides a more contextualized and content-specific analysis [29], [30]. The study also integrates image-based media with iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection to improve teaching practices. This approach allows for continuous improvement based on real classroom conditions. Therefore, this study contributes new insights into the practical application of visual media in elementary Social Studies education.

The implications of this study are significant for both teachers and educational practitioners. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate image-based media as an effective instructional strategy to enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes. The use of visual media can create a more interactive and meaningful learning experience, especially for abstract topics [31]. Additionally, this approach supports the development of critical thinking and collaborative skills among students [32]. Therefore, integrating innovative teaching media should become a priority in improving the quality of education.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the study was conducted in a single classroom with a limited number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the duration of the research was relatively short, consisting of only two cycles. Third, the study focused on a specific topic within Social Studies, which may not represent all subject areas. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples, longer durations, and different subject contexts. By addressing these limitations, further studies can provide more comprehensive evidence on the effectiveness of image-based media in education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of image-based media effectively improves students' learning outcomes in Social Studies, particularly on the topic of Indonesia's foreign policy, as initially expected in the introduction. The findings demonstrate a significant increase in students' mean scores and mastery levels, supported by enhanced engagement and participation during the learning process. The iterative cycles of Classroom Action Research contributed to the refinement of instructional strategies, resulting in a more effective and student-centered learning environment. Furthermore, the use of visual media proved to be instrumental in helping students understand abstract concepts by connecting them with concrete representations. These results highlight the potential of image-based media as an innovative instructional approach that can be applied in similar educational contexts. Future research is recommended to expand the application of this approach across different subjects, educational levels, and learning environments to further validate and develop its effectiveness.

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