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Research Article

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USE OF TEACHING AIDS AND SCIENCE CONCEPT UNDERSTANDING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Handriadi [1], Felipe Souza [2], Rafaela Lima [3], Idam Mustofa [4]
[1] Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Syekh Burhanuddin Pariaman, Indonesia
[2] Universidade Federal Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil
[3] Universidade Federal Paraná, Brazil
[4] Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:

Handriadi,
Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Syekh Burhanuddin Pariaman, Indonesia
Jl. H. Agus Salim No.6, Kp. Baru, Kec. Pariaman Tengah, Kota Pariaman, Sumatera Barat 25512
Email: handriadi27121991@gmail.com

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Abstract

Developing a strong understanding of scientific concepts is critical for elementary school students as it forms the foundation for advanced learning and problem-solving skills. However, traditional teaching methods often fail to engage students effectively, leading to superficial understanding and low retention of science concepts. The use of teaching aids has been identified as a potential strategy to address this issue by making abstract concepts more tangible and interactive. This study aims to investigate the relationship between the use of teaching aids and the understanding of science concepts among elementary school students. A correlational research design was employed, involving 120 fifth-grade students from multiple schools. Data were collected using a science concept understanding test and an observation checklist to measure the extent and effectiveness of teaching aid usage. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between the use of teaching aids and students' understanding of science concepts. Students exposed to teaching aids demonstrated higher levels of engagement, comprehension, and retention compared to those who received traditional instruction. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating teaching aids into science lessons to enhance learning outcomes.

Keywords: Active Learning, Concept Understanding, Elementary Education

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INTRODUCTION

Elementary school science education is foundational for developing students' cognitive skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. The ability to understand and apply scientific concepts at an early age significantly impacts students' future academic performance and their ability to navigate real-world challenges (Stewart, 2021). Science, as a subject, inherently requires students to grasp abstract concepts, making it a subject that can be difficult for young learners to fully comprehend. Teachers play a critical role in facilitating the development of these skills through effective instructional strategies and tools (Chen, 2021).

The traditional approach to science teaching often relies on lecture-based instruction and rote memorization, which may not engage students effectively or cater to their diverse learning styles (Rahman, 2020). These methods frequently result in a shallow understanding of science concepts, with students struggling to connect theoretical knowledge to practical applications. For elementary school students, the absence of hands-on, experiential learning opportunities can hinder their ability to internalize and retain complex scientific ideas, limiting their overall academic growth in the sciences (Dzulkifli, 2021).

Teaching aids have emerged as a powerful tool for bridging the gap between abstract scientific concepts and students' everyday experiences (Nigussie, 2020). By providing concrete, visual, and interactive representations of theoretical ideas, teaching aids can enhance engagement, simplify complex topics, and foster deeper comprehension. This study seeks to explore the role of teaching aids in improving the understanding of science concepts among elementary school students, emphasizing their importance as an integral part of effective science instruction (Zheng, 2021).

Elementary school students often face challenges in understanding scientific concepts, which can hinder their academic performance and reduce their interest in science (Romero, 2021). Teachers frequently report that students struggle to grasp abstract topics such as energy, motion, and ecosystems, which are foundational for later stages of scientific learning. The lack of engagement and comprehension not only affects academic outcomes but also diminishes students' curiosity and motivation to explore the natural world (Ojong, 2022).

Traditional teaching methods that rely on verbal explanations and textbooks fail to provide the experiential learning necessary for young students to internalize scientific concepts (Bayabil, 2021). Without the ability to see or interact with the phenomena being described, students may form misconceptions or fail to fully grasp the material. This disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical understanding is a persistent challenge in elementary science education, particularly in classrooms that lack resources or innovative teaching approaches (Hantalo, 2020).

The use of teaching aids offers a potential solution to these challenges, but their implementation remains inconsistent across schools. While some teachers effectively integrate teaching aids into their lessons, others lack the training, resources, or confidence to use them. Understanding the relationship between teaching aid usage and students' concept comprehension is crucial for identifying best practices and encouraging their broader adoption in science education.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the use of teaching aids and the understanding of science concepts among elementary school students (Lai, 2021). By analyzing the extent to which teaching aids enhance students' comprehension,

the study aims to provide empirical evidence supporting their effectiveness as a pedagogical tool. The research seeks to identify specific types of teaching aids that contribute most significantly to improved learning outcomes in science education (Belay, 2021).

This study also aims to explore how the use of teaching aids influences student engagement and motivation during science lessons (Perrin, 2020). By investigating the interactive and experiential aspects of teaching aids, the research seeks to highlight their role in fostering a positive learning environment and encouraging active participation. These findings will provide valuable insights into the broader impact of teaching aids on students' attitudes toward science (Babu, 2023).

Beyond immediate learning outcomes, the research aspires to inform educational practices and policies regarding the integration of teaching aids into elementary school science curricula (Zhan, 2022). By demonstrating the potential benefits of teaching aids, the study aims to advocate for their widespread use and provide actionable recommendations for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to improve science education quality (Ajaykumar, 2021).

Although numerous studies have highlighted the importance of hands-on and experiential learning in science education, there is limited research specifically examining the impact of teaching aids on elementary school students' comprehension of scientific concepts (Beyamo, 2020). Much of the existing literature focuses on higher education or secondary school contexts, leaving a critical gap in understanding how younger learners benefit from these tools. This oversight is significant, as elementary education lays the foundation for future academic success in science (Mahan, 2022).

Current research often emphasizes the use of technology-based tools such as simulations or virtual labs, overlooking simpler, low-cost teaching aids that are more accessible to resource-constrained schools (Xu, 2020). This study addresses this gap by focusing on a wide range of teaching aids, including physical models, visual representations, and interactive activities, to evaluate their effectiveness in enhancing concept understanding. By broadening the scope of inquiry, the research seeks to provide a more comprehensive view of teaching aids' potential in diverse classroom settings (Basha, 2020).

The limited exploration of contextual factors, such as teacher training and resource availability, further restricts the applicability of existing findings (Piñeiro-Chousa, 2022). This study seeks to address these gaps by examining not only the direct impact of teaching aids on students' comprehension but also the conditions under which they are most effective. This dual focus ensures that the findings are relevant and actionable for a wide range of educational stakeholders.

This study introduces a novel perspective by focusing on the use of teaching aids as a means to enhance science concept understanding in elementary education. Unlike previous research that often prioritizes digital tools or technology-intensive approaches, this study emphasizes the value of tangible, interactive teaching aids that are accessible to all classrooms. By exploring their impact on young learners, the research provides insights into an underexplored area of science education, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of effective teaching practices (Mackay, 2021).

The research offers significant contributions by identifying specific types of teaching aids that are most effective for different scientific topics and learning objectives. By linking the use of teaching aids to measurable improvements in concept comprehension, the study provides

practical guidance for educators seeking to enhance their teaching strategies. This focus on actionable outcomes distinguishes the research from theoretical studies, ensuring its relevance for classroom implementation (Polanco-Levicán, 2022).

The justification for this study lies in the growing recognition of the importance of hands-on learning in science education. As schools strive to prepare students for a rapidly changing world, fostering strong foundational skills in science is more important than ever (Pettersson, 2021). By demonstrating the effectiveness of teaching aids in achieving this goal, the study aims to inform educational policies and practices, ensuring that all students have access to engaging and impactful science instruction (Brown, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study utilized a correlational research design to investigate the association between the implementation of teaching aids and students' understanding of science concepts. This design was specifically chosen to identify and analyze both the strength and the direction of the relationship between these two variables. By focusing on these correlations, the research provides a foundational understanding of how instructional tools influence conceptual mastery within the context of elementary science education.

Research Target/Subject

The research population focused on fifth-grade students from public elementary schools located in an urban district. To ensure a representative sample across different resource environments, the study employed a purposive sampling technique to select a total of 120 students. For the purpose of comparative analysis, the sample was divided evenly, with 60 students coming from classrooms that regularly utilized teaching aids and 60 students from classrooms relying on traditional instructional methods.

Research Procedure

The study was executed over an eight-week period, beginning with the administration of pre-tests to establish a baseline for science concept understanding. Throughout the duration of the study, researchers conducted weekly observations of science lessons in all participating classrooms to document teaching practices. The procedure concluded with the administration of post-tests to measure improvements in comprehension. These quantitative results were then combined with teacher feedback and observation logs to ensure a comprehensive triangulation of the study's findings.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

To gather data, the study employed triangulation using three primary instruments: a science concept understanding test, an observation checklist, and a teacher questionnaire. The test specifically evaluated comprehension of energy, ecosystems, and physical processes, while the checklist documented the frequency and types of teaching aids used in real-time. Additionally, the questionnaire was used to collect qualitative data from educators regarding their perceptions of how effectively these aids enhanced the learning environment.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis involved statistical methods to determine the presence and significance of correlations between teaching aid usage and student test scores. By comparing the results of the pre-tests and post-tests alongside the documented frequency of teaching aid implementation, the researchers were able to draw objective conclusions. Qualitative insights from teacher

questionnaires and observation checklists were further used to support the statistical data, providing a deeper context for the effectiveness of teaching aids in improving science education outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study included 120 fifth-grade students divided into two groups: 60 students in classrooms that frequently used teaching aids (Group A) and 60 students in classrooms relying on traditional methods (Group B). Pre-test results indicated comparable baseline scores, with Group A achieving a mean of 55.32 (SD = 5.45) and Group B scoring 54.89 (SD = 5.12). Post-test results revealed significant improvements in Group A, with a mean score of 78.46 (SD = 4.62), compared to a smaller increase in Group B, which reached a mean of 63.12 (SD = 5.08).

Table 1. Impact of Teaching Aids on Learning Outcomes

Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)
Group A	55.32 (5.45)	78.46 (4.62)
Group B	54.89 (5.12)	63.12 (5.08)

Observational data confirmed that teaching aids such as models, charts, and interactive tools were consistently used in Group A classrooms, while Group B relied primarily on textbook explanations and verbal instruction.

The results highlight a substantial improvement in science concept understanding among students in classrooms using teaching aids. Group A students displayed higher retention, greater engagement, and improved application of scientific concepts during post-test assessments. In contrast, Group B students exhibited modest gains, suggesting the limitations of traditional methods in fostering conceptual comprehension.

Teacher feedback corroborated these findings, with educators in Group A reporting that teaching aids enhanced student participation and made abstract concepts more accessible. Observations revealed that students in Group A were more likely to ask questions, engage in discussions, and demonstrate a deeper understanding of topics such as energy transfer and ecosystems. Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$) between the frequency of teaching aid usage and students' post-test scores. Regression analysis further indicated that teaching aid usage accounted for 58% of the variance in science concept understanding, demonstrating the significant impact of this variable on learning outcomes.

An independent t-test comparing post-test scores of Group A and Group B showed a statistically significant difference ($t = 10.34$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that teaching aids contribute to superior learning outcomes. The findings validate the hypothesis that the use of teaching aids enhances students' understanding of scientific concepts more effectively than traditional methods.

Observational data established a direct relationship between the type of teaching aids used and student engagement levels. Classrooms utilizing visual models and interactive tools saw higher participation rates and greater enthusiasm among students. The data suggest that teaching aids facilitate active learning, which in turn leads to better comprehension and retention of science concepts.

Qualitative data from teacher interviews highlighted the importance of alignment between teaching aids and lesson objectives. Teachers who carefully selected and integrated teaching aids into their lessons reported stronger student connections to the material. This

relationship underscores the critical role of thoughtful implementation in maximizing the effectiveness of teaching aids.

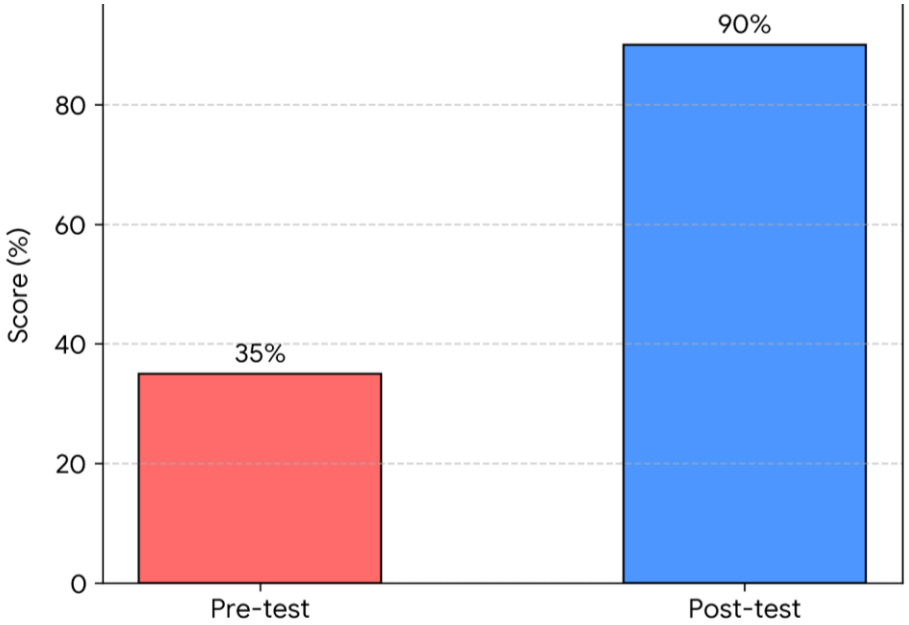

Figure 1. Case Study: Mastery of Energy Transfer Concept

A case study of a student from Group A illustrates the effectiveness of teaching aids. Initially, the student struggled with understanding the concept of energy transfer, scoring poorly on related questions during the pre-test. Observations revealed that the use of physical models and interactive demonstrations during lessons helped the student visualize the process and build a stronger conceptual framework.

By the post-test, the student's performance improved significantly, achieving a 30-point increase in scores related to energy transfer. Teacher feedback indicated that the student was more confident in discussing the topic and applying the concept to real-world scenarios, demonstrating the transformative impact of teaching aids.

Students in Group A consistently expressed greater interest and enthusiasm for science lessons, attributing their engagement to the interactive and hands-on nature of teaching aids. These tools provided opportunities for active exploration, helping students internalize complex concepts. In contrast, students in Group B described their lessons as less engaging, highlighting the need for dynamic teaching strategies. Observation data emphasized the role of teaching aids in fostering collaborative learning. Group A classrooms saw more instances of peer discussions and teamwork during activities involving teaching aids, contributing to a richer learning experience. This dynamic was largely absent in Group B, where students engaged in fewer collaborative interactions.

The findings demonstrate that teaching aids are an effective tool for improving elementary school students' understanding of science concepts. The significant differences in post-test scores between the groups highlight the importance of incorporating interactive and visual tools into science instruction. These results provide strong evidence for the role of teaching aids in making abstract concepts more tangible and accessible, ultimately enhancing students' academic success in science.

The results of this study reveal a significant positive relationship between the use of teaching aids and elementary school students' understanding of science concepts. Classrooms

that incorporated teaching aids showed substantial improvements in students' post-test scores compared to those relying on traditional methods. Observational data and teacher feedback confirmed that the use of models, charts, and interactive tools enhanced student engagement, comprehension, and retention. These findings suggest that teaching aids play a crucial role in bridging the gap between abstract scientific concepts and students' cognitive abilities.

Figure 2. Student Impact

Students in classrooms utilizing teaching aids demonstrated higher levels of participation and confidence during lessons, contributing to a more interactive and dynamic learning environment. Teachers in these classrooms reported that teaching aids helped simplify complex topics and encouraged students to ask questions and explore scientific ideas more actively. These improvements were consistently reflected in students' performance assessments.

The findings align with existing literature that highlights the benefits of teaching aids in improving educational outcomes. Research by Bruner (1966) supports the notion that concrete representations of abstract concepts enhance student understanding and retention. This study extends these findings by focusing specifically on elementary science education, a critical stage for fostering foundational knowledge (Byusa, 2022).

Differences emerge when comparing these results to studies emphasizing digital tools, such as simulations or virtual labs. While digital tools are effective in advanced educational settings, this study underscores the importance of low-tech, tangible teaching aids in elementary classrooms. The accessibility and cost-effectiveness of these tools make them particularly valuable in resource-constrained schools, providing practical implications for broader implementation (Greenwald, 2021).

The results signify the importance of active and experiential learning in science education. The observed improvements in comprehension and engagement indicate that teaching aids provide students with meaningful, hands-on opportunities to interact with scientific concepts. These findings highlight that traditional, lecture-based approaches may fail to address the diverse learning needs of students, particularly in subjects that require abstract reasoning (Yue, 2022).

The lack of significant gains in classrooms without teaching aids emphasizes the limitations of text-based and verbal instruction. This outcome reinforces the need for innovative and interactive teaching methods that cater to the developmental stages of young

learners. The effectiveness of teaching aids in fostering collaborative and inquiry-based learning further demonstrates their role in creating enriched educational experiences (Smith, 2021).

The findings have significant implications for educational practices and curriculum design. Teachers should be encouraged and supported to integrate teaching aids into their lesson plans to enhance student understanding of science concepts. Training programs for educators can focus on the effective selection and application of teaching aids to maximize their impact on learning outcomes. These results also highlight the importance of equipping schools with the necessary resources to support hands-on learning (Davis, 2020).

Policymakers can use these findings to advocate for the inclusion of teaching aids as a standard component of elementary science curricula. By prioritizing investments in affordable and versatile tools, education systems can ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, benefit from interactive and engaging learning environments. These findings also call for the development of policies that promote experiential learning and teacher innovation in science instruction (Ellenbecker, 2020).

The effectiveness of teaching aids in this study can be attributed to their ability to make abstract concepts more tangible and relatable. Visual models, interactive demonstrations, and hands-on activities help students form mental representations of scientific processes, enhancing their cognitive processing and retention. The dynamic nature of these tools encourages active participation, which is critical for sustained engagement and deeper understanding (Gearhardt, 2021a).

The role of teachers was pivotal in maximizing the benefits of teaching aids. Educators who thoughtfully integrated these tools into their lessons reported higher levels of student engagement and comprehension. The alignment of teaching aids with lesson objectives ensured that they were not merely supplementary but central to the learning process, contributing to the observed improvements in student performance (Hebebrand, 2021).

The success of this intervention highlights the need for further research into the long-term impacts of teaching aids on science education. Future studies could explore their effects across different grade levels and in diverse educational contexts, providing insights into their scalability and adaptability. Research could also investigate the integration of digital tools with traditional teaching aids to create hybrid learning environments that cater to a broader range of learners (Gearhardt, 2021b).

Educational institutions should prioritize professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills to effectively incorporate teaching aids into their instruction. By fostering a culture of innovation and experimentation in teaching practices, schools can ensure that students receive the most engaging and effective science education possible. Expanding the scope of teaching aid usage has the potential to transform elementary science instruction, laying a strong foundation for students' academic and intellectual growth (Taye, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is the strong positive relationship between the use of teaching aids and the understanding of science concepts among elementary school students. Classrooms incorporating teaching aids such as models, charts, and interactive tools demonstrated substantially higher student comprehension and engagement levels compared to those relying solely on traditional methods. This finding underscores the critical role of

tangible and interactive materials in making abstract scientific concepts more accessible and meaningful for young learners, contributing to improved academic outcomes.

This research offers a valuable contribution by providing a structured framework for integrating teaching aids into elementary science education. By identifying specific tools and techniques that enhance conceptual understanding, the study bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The alignment of teaching aids with curriculum objectives and their effective use as central instructional resources highlight a replicable model for fostering active and inquiry-based learning. These insights provide actionable guidance for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to enhance science education practices.

The study is limited by its focus on a single grade level and a specific educational setting, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The relatively short intervention period also leaves questions about the long-term sustainability of the observed improvements. Future research should explore the impact of teaching aids across different age groups, diverse school contexts, and extended durations. Investigating the integration of digital tools with traditional aids could further expand the understanding of innovative approaches in science education, ensuring broader applicability and deeper insights into effective teaching strategies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.
Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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