

Efforts to Improve Social Studies Learning Outcomes Through the Field Trip Learning Method in Fourth Grade Islamic Elementary School

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Abstract

This research was motivated by the low social studies learning outcomes of fourth grade students at an Islamic elementary school in East Java, Indonesia. The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether the Field Trip learning method could enhance the social studies learning outcomes of fourth grade students during the 2023/2024 academic year. The study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) methodology, conducted over two cycles. The subjects consisted of 20 students. Data were collected through observation sheets, tests, and documentation, and were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings revealed a notable improvement in student learning outcomes. In cycle one, 10 students (50%) achieved the minimum mastery criteria, which increased to 16 students (80%) in cycle 2 demonstrating substantial progress. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the use of the Field Trip method is effective in improving student learning outcomes in social studies for fourth grade students at the studied Islamic elementary school during the 2023/2024 academic year.

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1. Introduction

From a pedagogical perspective, learning is a deliberate and organized effort to create a supportive environment that fosters the optimal development of each student's unique potential. Effective learning must be student-centered, acknowledging that learners are the primary focus in the acquisition of knowledge. Since every student possesses diverse characteristics, these individual differences must be taken into account when organizing learning processes. This approach ensures that educational objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently (Adriyah, 2019).

The learning process requires the application of appropriate strategies, methods, and the use of relevant resources and media to ensure that students internalize the material in accordance with the objectives of the learning activities. Conceptually, the term "teaching and learning" refers to two interdependent processes: teaching and learning. These are integrative processes because learning occurs through dynamic interactions between individuals and their environment (Lawalata et al., 2023).

However, at a certain Islamic elementary school in East Java, the academic performance of fourth-grade students in social studies remains low compared to other subjects. This stagnation is presumed to result from unengaging learning designs and limited opportunities for active student participation. This concern is supported by data from end-of-semester assessments, which consistently show lower achievement in social studies compared to other subjects.

According to available data, the minimum mastery criteria for social studies is set at 70. However, only 5 students scored above this threshold, while 15 students failed to meet the target. This suggests that the majority of students have not yet mastered the subject matter. This ongoing issue highlights the need to adopt a more effective learning model. Observations conducted on December 10, 2024, revealed three major problems: (1) limited availability and utilization of effective learning media, (2) minimal application of the material by students, and (3) overall low student achievement in social studies. These findings emphasize the urgency of implementing a more engaging pedagogical approach to improve understanding and performance in the subject.

Based on interviews with teachers and classroom observations, the researchers, in collaboration with fourth-grade teachers, proposed an alternative solution through the use of the Field Trip method. This method is expected to enhance students' understanding and improve their social studies achievement. The appropriate

use of methods in teaching social studies is believed to enhance students' skills in this subject area. This particular school has never previously implemented the Field Trip method, especially in the context of social studies learning (Suryantika & Aliyyah, 2023).

The Field Trip method is a teaching approach in which students are invited to visit relevant locations that serve as contextual learning environments. These locations do not necessarily have to be far from the school. Learning in an outdoor setting offers a fresh atmosphere and can significantly enhance student engagement and motivation. By participating in field trips, students gain real-world experiences that help broaden their knowledge and perspective. These experiences may also deepen students' appreciation for nature and increase their awareness that learning can occur outside the classroom by utilizing surrounding resources. Such an approach can make learning more accessible, practical, and enjoyable (Rahmadhani et al., 2023).

During the implementation of this method, the teacher guides students to a selected location that serves as a direct learning object. At this site, students are expected to observe and explore information relevant to social studies content, particularly topics related to natural and environmental elements. Students then record their observations and experiences, applying them to social studies concepts. This immersive learning strategy is designed to enhance student sensitivity and comprehension, especially in understanding topics such as the animal life cycle (Afiani & Faradita, 2021).

2. Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The data gathered from this integration are primarily presented through narratives and written descriptions, rather than relying solely on numerical data. This approach directly engages with the research subjects within a specific organization or institution, treating it holistically as a contextual "setting" in which the participants operate. The qualitative component enables a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the subjects being studied. Furthermore, the variables and hypotheses are not examined in isolation but are instead viewed as interconnected elements within a larger framework making the overall approach inherently holistic.

This study adopts Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its primary research design, which is well-suited for addressing and solving practical problems within the classroom environment. According to Ali (2018), CAR is a self-reflective inquiry conducted by participants in educational or social settings, aimed at improving the rationality and validity of their practices, as well as enhancing their understanding of these practices and the contexts in which they occur.

CAR is typically conducted by teachers within their own classrooms to improve instructional practices. The design of this study follows the Kemmis and McTaggart cycle, which comprises four key stages: **Planning**, developing an action plan based on identified classroom problems. **Action**, implementing the plan during instructional activities. **Observation**, monitoring and documenting the process and its immediate effects. **Reflection**, evaluating the outcomes and identifying improvements for the subsequent cycle.

A defining characteristic of CAR is that the teacher serves as the primary researcher. This insider perspective is crucial, as teachers have a deep familiarity with the specific challenges and dynamics of their own classrooms, including students' individual needs and learning styles. Such familiarity allows for the selection and implementation of contextually appropriate instructional interventions.

In this study, the CAR process follows the Kemmis–McTaggart model and includes the following phases for each cycle: **Problem Diagnosis**, identifying and thoroughly understanding the core issue in the classroom. **Action Planning**, designing targeted strategies to address the issue. **Action**, implementation and Observation: Executing the plan while simultaneously observing and documenting events and outcomes. Evaluation, assessing the effectiveness of the actions in relation to the initial problem. **Reflection**, critically analyzing the entire cycle to inform future improvements.

A purposive sampling technique was employed, whereby the researcher selected fourth-grade students from a specific population as the study participants. The observational data in this research consist of records of student learning activities, including lesson plans developed by the teacher and student activity sheets that track participation during lessons. The Field Trip Method was used to facilitate the observation of student engagement during the learning process. For data collection, the following instruments were used: **test instruments**, daily formative test sheets containing questions aligned with the material taught. **Documentation instruments**, these include official documents and contextual materials such as school profiles, attendance records, syllabi, lesson plans, approval letters, as well as photos and videos documenting the research process. **Interview and questionnaire instruments**, used to collect additional qualitative data related to perceptions and experiences.

Quantitative data analysis was employed to measure student learning outcomes through written test scores, which indicate improvement from one cycle to the next. Meanwhile, qualitative data analysis focused on student behavior and participation, analyzed through observation checklists in each cycle of the CAR process.

3. Results and Discussion

The implementation of the Field Trip method was carried out through a series of well-planned actions by the researchers in collaboration with classroom teachers. The research was conducted outside the classroom, with data collection and observations carried out during teaching and learning activities. In general, the intervention consisted of conducting the learning process using the Field Trip method, accompanied by concurrent observations of student behavior and engagement throughout the implementation.

During these observations, researchers focused on students' learning activities during the outdoor sessions. The assessment of students was carried out using observation sheets, which documented behavioral changes and levels of engagement throughout the learning process. As stated by Bainah and Huriyah (2024), changes in student behavior during Field Trip-based learning reflect the method's positive influence on learning outcomes. Although the improvements observed during Cycle 1 were still categorized as "sufficient," they showed an upward trend compared to prior results.

Learning outcomes following the use of the Field Trip method were notably different from outcomes in traditional, classroom-based instruction. A study by Fitriyani (2021) similarly concluded that the Field Trip method improved student performance; in her study, student achievement increased from 43.37% in Cycle 1 to 86.7% in Cycle 2. This substantial progress illustrates the method's effectiveness in enhancing academic performance.

Comparable findings were reported by Ubaidillah (2018), whose study showed that prior to the intervention, students struggled to express their ideas in writing and demonstrated low motivation, especially in essay writing. After implementing the Field Trip method, students reported enjoying outdoor learning, which improved their willingness to express ideas, focus, and engagement. Their average pre-test score was 65 (low), while their post-test average rose to 82.5 (high), indicating that the Field Trip method had a significant impact on learning outcomes (Muadi, Yusnia, & Wahyuni, 2023).

In this Classroom Action Research (CAR), the researchers conducted two intervention cycles, each consisting of two meetings. The location of the research was an elementary-level madrasah in a rural area, which will remain unnamed for confidentiality purposes. In the first meeting of Cycle 1, a pre-test was administered to evaluate students' baseline understanding. The researcher then implemented a series of planned actions intended to improve students' academic performance. A post-test was given at the end of Cycle 1 to assess the outcomes. While there were observable improvements, the cycle was not considered fully successful. Several challenges were noted, including a lack of student focus and low levels of participation. Some students appeared distracted and hesitant to ask questions about the material, consistent with findings from Nurfaidah et al. (2023).

By Cycle 2, the learning process showed considerable improvement. Most students were actively engaged and demonstrated greater focus, as reflected in improved scores. These changes confirmed the effectiveness of the Field Trip method in enhancing learning outcomes (Serang, Qamaruzzaman, & Hafid, 2020).

The success of the Field Trip method aligns with preliminary observations indicating that student achievement in social studies had not previously met the required minimum criteria. As the study progressed, each implementation of the method yielded consistent improvements in learning outcomes. This is in line with the findings of Nurul Hidayah U., Astuti, and Zuhri (2023), who emphasized that the Field Trip method allows students to directly observe and explore materials, conduct interviews, and engage in discussion all of which contribute to a meaningful and experiential learning process.

Additionally, students demonstrated increased enthusiasm for learning. Those who were previously disengaged or disruptive began to participate more seriously (Yulia, 2017). These behavioral shifts were supported by quantitative data collected in each cycle, which showed a continuous upward trend in student achievement. While the results in Cycle 1 were categorized as "sufficient," those in Cycle 2 rose to the "good" category. The following figure present detailed data on the improvement in student learning outcomes between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 during social studies instruction.

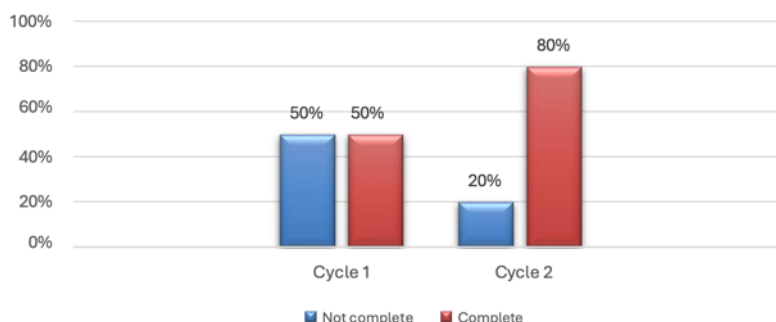


Figure 1. Completion Values in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Data from the pre-cycle, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2 clearly illustrate substantial improvements in student scores and learning achievement in social studies, particularly regarding the topic of life cycles in living organisms. In the pre-cycle phase, the average student score was 61, with only 25% of students meeting the minimum mastery criteria. The highest score achieved was 85, while the lowest score was 0, reflecting a general lack of understanding among many students.

Following the initial implementation of the Field Trip method in Cycle 1, there was a noticeable improvement: the average post-test score rose to 72, and the completion rate increased to 50%. This marks a 25% increase in student comprehension compared to the pre-cycle phase. The highest score in this cycle reached 90, while the lowest score improved to 60, indicating positive shifts in overall student performance.

The most significant improvement occurred in Cycle 2. The average post-test score jumped to 84.5, with a mastery rate of 80%, meaning that 16 out of 20 students achieved the established learning objectives. This shows a 30% improvement from Cycle 1. The highest score in Cycle 2 reached a perfect 100, with the lowest score remaining at 60, demonstrating both improvement and consistency in student learning outcomes. Importantly, the intended target of at least 75% student mastery was exceeded. These results, supported by quantitative data and observation confirm the effectiveness of the Field Trip method in significantly enhancing learning outcomes in social studies. This success is attributed to the strategic and optimal implementation of the method by the classroom teacher. As Bramasta, Rahayu, and Setiawan (2022) emphasize, experiential learning through Field Trips can stimulate student engagement and deepen conceptual understanding.

However, despite these positive results, it is important to consider the limitations and challenges associated with implementing the Field Trip method. According to Simamora (2021), for Field Trips to be effective and free from unnecessary disruptions, teachers must possess several key competencies. They should be able to identify field trip sites that align with specific learning objectives. Additionally, teachers must design clear instructional plans and student guides, and adequately prepare the necessary tools and materials for field activities. They must also demonstrate strong classroom management skills to supervise, facilitate, and guide students during off-site learning, while having the capability to assess the learning process and outcomes of field-based instruction. By paying careful attention to these factors, educators can maximize the benefits of Field Trip-based learning while minimizing logistical and instructional challenges.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the Field Trip learning method over two cycles resulted in significant improvements in student comprehension. In Cycle 1, we observed initial progress, with a completion rate of 50%. Cycle 2 demonstrated an even more substantial increase in achievement, with the average post-test score rising to 84.5 and the completion rate reaching 80%. This indicates that 16 out of 20 students achieved mastery, marking a remarkable 30% improvement in student understanding compared to Cycle I. Furthermore, both the highest and lowest scores improved, suggesting a broader positive impact across the student cohort. The study successfully met its target: the intended 75% completion rate was surpassed, reaching an actual completion rate of 80%. Prior to the implementation of the Field Trip method, student learning outcomes were notably low, the average pre-test score was only 61, and just 25% of students met the minimum criteria. The Field Trip learning method has proven to be effective in enhancing student outcomes in Social Studies. By engaging in direct field experiences, students became more active, enthusiastic, and capable of understanding the material in a contextualized manner. For teachers, this method offers an engaging and meaningful alternative strategy that enriches instructional practices. For curriculum developers, these findings provide valuable insights for designing more flexible, experiential, and contextually relevant curricula. Therefore, the Field Trip method deserves consideration as an innovative approach in Social Studies instruction, with a demonstrable positive impact on student competency achievement.

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