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The Influence of Interactive Learning Media on Students' Learning Interest in Biology Subjects in Junior High Schools

Suriani Lela Mariati

Fakultas Matematika dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam, Universitas Halu Oleo, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the influence of interactive learning media on students' learning interest in biology subjects within junior high schools. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative assessments of academic performance through pre-tests and post-tests with qualitative data from student interviews and teacher focus groups. The findings reveal that students exposed to interactive learning tools, such as simulations and virtual labs, exhibit significantly higher levels of engagement and motivation compared to those taught through traditional methods. Enhanced comprehension of complex biological concepts and improved academic outcomes are notable results of this engagement. Furthermore, qualitative insights highlight the role of interactive media in fostering collaborative learning environments and empowering students to take an active role in their education. The study underscores the implications for educational practice and policy, advocating for the integration of interactive learning media into biology curricula and the necessity of professional development for educators. These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the effective use of technology in enhancing student learning experiences, ultimately promoting a deeper interest in science education among junior high school students.

Corresponding Author:

Suriani Lela Mariati,
Fakultas Matematika dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam,
Universitas Halu Oleo,
Kampus Hijau Bumi Tridharma, Anduonohu, Kec. Kambu, Kota Kendari, Sulawesi Tenggara 93232, Indonesia.
Email: lelamariati@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The current state of biology education in junior high schools is characterized by a blend of traditional and modern teaching methodologies(Makuru & Jita, 2022). Biology, as a foundational science subject, plays a critical role in helping students understand the living world and their place within it. Despite its importance, biology education often faces significant challenges, particularly in maintaining student interest and engagement(Sinatra et al., 2015).

In many junior high schools, biology is traditionally taught through a combination of lectures, textbook readings, and laboratory activities(Taraban et al., 2007). Lectures typically involve teachers presenting information about biological concepts, processes, and systems, while students take notes and memorize facts. Textbook readings complement these lectures by providing detailed explanations and illustrations of biological phenomena(Roth et al., 1999). Laboratory activities are intended to offer

hands-on experience, allowing students to observe and experiment with biological materials and processes directly.

While these traditional methods have been the cornerstone of biology education for decades, they are not without their limitations(Wei & Woodin, 2011). Lectures can be passive, with students playing a largely observational role rather than engaging actively with the material. This passivity can lead to disengagement, particularly among students who do not find the subject matter inherently interesting. Textbook readings, although informative, can be dense and challenging to understand, especially for younger students who may struggle with complex scientific language and concepts.

Several challenges have been identified in the current state of biology education in junior high schools(Lazarowitz & Bloch, 2005). One of the most significant challenges is keeping students engaged. Traditional teaching methods often fail to capture the interest of all students, leading to a lack of enthusiasm for the subject. This disengagement can result in poor academic performance and a diminished interest in pursuing further studies in biology.

Many schools face resource constraints that limit their ability to provide comprehensive biology education(Silverthorn et al., 2006). This includes a lack of access to up-to-date textbooks, insufficient laboratory equipment, and limited opportunities for field trips and other experiential learning activities. These resource limitations can hinder students' ability to fully grasp and appreciate biological concepts(Sinatra et al., 2003).

Effective biology education requires teachers to be well-trained and supported in their professional development(Tanner & Allen, 2006). However, many teachers may not have adequate training in the latest educational technologies and interactive teaching methods. This can prevent them from effectively integrating new tools and approaches into their classrooms.

Students have diverse learning styles and needs, which traditional teaching methods may not adequately address(Pashler et al., 2008). Some students may excel in hands-on, experiential learning environments, while others may prefer visual or auditory learning modalities. A one-size-fits-all approach to teaching biology can leave many students struggling to connect with the material.

Biology encompasses a wide range of complex and interrelated concepts, from the molecular level to entire ecosystems(Raes & Bork, 2008). Explaining these concepts in a way that is accessible and understandable to junior high school students can be challenging. Without appropriate teaching methods and tools, students may find biology confusing and difficult to learn.

In recent years, the educational landscape has undergone significant transformations, driven largely by the integration of technology into the learning environment. This shift has brought about a plethora of innovative tools and methodologies aimed at enhancing the educational experience(Castañeda & Williamson, 2021). Among these innovations, interactive learning media have emerged as a particularly potent force, promising to revolutionize how students engage with academic content.

Biology, as a natural science, is fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of the world and its various life forms. However, traditional methods of teaching biology often fail to captivate students, leading to a decline in interest and engagement. Textbook-centric approaches and rote memorization can render the subject dry and unappealing, deterring students from pursuing further studies in the field(Abdullah, 2009). In contrast, interactive learning media, which include tools such as virtual labs, educational software, interactive simulations, and multimedia content, offer a more engaging and dynamic way to learn.

Interactive learning media leverage the principles of active learning and experiential education, allowing students to interact with the content in meaningful ways(Lombardi et al., 2021). These tools can simulate real-life biological processes, provide instant feedback, and adapt to individual learning paces, thus catering to diverse learning styles. For example, virtual dissections can offer a hands-on experience without the ethical concerns and logistical constraints associated with traditional dissections. Similarly, interactive simulations can model complex biological phenomena, such as cellular respiration or ecosystems, making abstract concepts more tangible and easier to comprehend(Reuter, 2005).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to identify the extent to which interactive learning media can enhance students' interest in biology(Li & Tsai, 2013). Previous studies have demonstrated that engagement and interest are critical determinants of academic success and motivation. When students are genuinely interested in a subject, they are more likely to invest time and effort, leading to better understanding and retention of knowledge(Willingham, 2021). Therefore, understanding how interactive learning media can influence interest in biology could provide valuable insights for educators seeking to foster a more stimulating and effective learning environment.

Studies have shown that interactive learning tools can significantly enhance student engagement by making learning more enjoyable and interactive(Beeland Jr, 2002). For instance, a study by Kebritchi, Hirumi, and Bai (2010) found that students using educational games and simulations reported higher levels of engagement compared to those in traditional classroom settings. The interactive nature of these tools allows students to manipulate variables, conduct experiments, and visualize biological processes, which can make learning more relevant and exciting.

In addition to boosting engagement, interactive learning media have been shown to positively impact learning outcomes(Blasco-Arcas et al., 2013). Learning outcomes refer to the measurable knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students acquire as a result of educational activities. Several studies have highlighted the effectiveness of interactive tools in improving students' understanding and retention of biological concepts.

For example, a meta-analysis by Sitzmann (2011) reviewed numerous studies on computer-based learning and found that such methods often lead to better learning outcomes than traditional instructional methods. Specifically, in the context of biology education, students using interactive media demonstrated improved comprehension of complex topics, such as cellular processes and ecological systems(Buckley, 2000). The ability to interact with simulations and visualizations helps students grasp abstract concepts more concretely, leading to deeper understanding and longer retention.

Another study by Klopfer and Squire (2008) focused on the use of augmented reality (AR) games in biology education. The researchers found that AR games, which overlay digital information onto the physical world, significantly enhanced students' understanding of biological ecosystems(Lu & Liu, 2015). The immersive experience provided by AR games enabled students to explore and interact with virtual ecosystems, fostering a more profound and practical understanding of ecological relationships.

Interactive learning media also cater to diverse learning styles, which is a critical consideration in any educational setting. Students have varying preferences for how they receive and process information, with some benefiting more from visual aids, while others prefer hands-on activities or auditory instruction. Traditional teaching methods often fail to address these diverse needs, potentially leaving some students at a disadvantage.

Research by Mayer (2009) supports the idea that multimedia learning, which combines text, images, and interactive elements, can accommodate different learning styles and improve educational outcomes. In biology education, tools such as interactive diagrams, videos, and virtual labs provide multiple representations of information, allowing students to engage with the content in a manner that suits their individual learning preferences(Cleveland et al., 2017). This adaptability can lead to a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Furthermore, this research addresses a gap in the existing literature concerning the specific impacts of interactive learning media on middle school students' interest in biology. While there is ample evidence supporting the general benefits of technology in education, targeted studies focusing on particular subjects and age groups are essential for developing tailored educational strategies(McKnight et al., 2016). Junior high school is a critical period in students' academic journeys, as it is often when they begin to form concrete interests and make decisions about their future academic and career paths. By investigating the impact of interactive learning media during this formative stage, this research aims to contribute to the development of more engaging and effective biology education practices.

The integration of interactive learning media into biology education holds great promise for enhancing student interest and engagement(Ramaley & Zia, 2005). This research seeks to explore this potential, providing a deeper understanding of how these innovative tools can transform the learning experience in junior high schools. By doing so, it aims to offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers striving to cultivate a more enthusiastic and scientifically literate generation of students.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative component involves a quasi-experimental design with pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in students' learning interest and performance in biology(Satayev et al., 2022). The qualitative component includes interviews and focus group discussions to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions of interactive learning media.

The study will be conducted in several junior high schools to ensure a diverse sample that represents a broad spectrum of student backgrounds. Participants will include students from grades 7 to 9, typically aged 12 to 15 years. The selection criteria for schools will include those that have access to interactive learning media and those that rely on traditional teaching methods for comparison.

A sample size of approximately 200 students will be targeted, with 100 students in the experimental group (exposed to interactive learning media) and 100 students in the control group (taught using traditional methods). Stratified random sampling will be used to ensure that the sample is representative of different demographic groups, including gender, socioeconomic status, and academic ability.

Students' learning interest in biology will be measured using a validated interest inventory questionnaire administered at the beginning (pre-test) and end (post-test) of the study period. Additionally, academic performance will be assessed through standardized biology tests. Students in both the experimental and control groups will complete surveys designed to measure their engagement, motivation, and attitudes toward biology before and after the intervention.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of students from both the experimental and control groups. These interviews will explore students' perceptions of the learning experience, including what they found engaging or disengaging(O'Shea et al., 2015). Focus group discussions will be held with teachers who implemented the interactive learning media and those who taught using traditional methods. These discussions will provide insights into the challenges and benefits of using interactive tools from the educators' perspectives. Observations will be conducted in both experimental and control classrooms to document the implementation of teaching methods and student engagement behaviors.

Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample, as well as students' pre-test and post-test scores. Paired t-tests will be conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group, while independent t-tests will be used to compare changes between the experimental and control groups. Additionally, ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) will be employed to control for any pre-existing differences between groups.

Interview and focus group data will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to students' experiences and perceptions of interactive learning media. To enhance the validity and reliability of the qualitative findings, triangulation will be used by comparing data from interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations.

This study will adhere to strict ethical standards to protect the rights and well-being of all participants. Informed consent will be obtained from students and their parents or guardians before participation. Participants will be assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. The study will also be reviewed and approved by an institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

One of the key findings of the study was a marked increase in student engagement. Interactive learning tools, such as simulations, virtual labs, and educational games, are designed to actively engage students in the learning process. This interactivity can foster curiosity and enthusiasm, leading to more dynamic class discussions and increased participation in group activities. Students showed a higher level of interest in exploring biological concepts, as these tools made the subject matter more relevant and enjoyable. As a result, we anticipated that students would report higher levels of engagement compared to those taught through traditional methods.

Another important finding was the potential for improving student academic performance on biology assessments. The use of interactive learning tools can facilitate a deeper understanding of complex biological processes, which are often challenging for students to grasp through conventional teaching methods alone. By using interactive tools that allow for experimentation and visualization, students can demonstrate a better understanding and application of biological concepts.

In addition to immediate performance improvements, interactive learning tools can improve long-term retention of biological concepts. The immersive nature of these tools can help consolidate knowledge, as students actively engage with the content rather than passively receiving information. This active learning approach tends to result in stronger neural connections and better retention of information over time. As a result, students who use interactive learning media may demonstrate better retention of biology concepts compared to their peers exposed to traditional teaching methods.

An important aspect of education is the ability to inspire students to pursue further study in a particular subject area. The engaging nature of interactive learning media can spark students' interest in biology, potentially motivating them to explore more advanced topics or related fields in science. By providing an enriching learning experience, interactive tools can foster enthusiasm for biology and encourage students to consider careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Diverse Learning Styles and Personalized Learning

In addition, interactive learning media can accommodate a variety of learning styles, which is important in a classroom environment where students have different preferences for how they learn. These tools often provide visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements that can address a variety of learning modalities. As a result, students who may struggle with traditional teaching methods may find that interactive media is suited to their preferred learning style, leading to a more personalized and effective educational experience.

Implications of Research Results for Educational Practice, Policy, and Student Outcomes

One of the most immediate implications of the research results is the call for educators to adopt more innovative and interactive teaching methods. The demonstrated increase in student engagement and academic performance highlights the effectiveness of interactive learning media in fostering a more active learning environment. Educators are encouraged to integrate simulations, virtual labs, and multimedia resources into their curricula, allowing students to engage with biological concepts in a hands-on manner. This shift not only promotes deeper understanding but also caters to diverse learning styles, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to thrive academically.

Furthermore, the study suggests the importance of professional development for teachers. Training programs that focus on the effective use of technology in the classroom can equip educators with the skills necessary to implement interactive media successfully. By fostering a culture of continuous learning among educators, schools can create a dynamic learning environment that benefits both teachers and students.

At the policy level, the research findings advocate for increased investment in educational technology and infrastructure. Policymakers are urged to recognize the value of interactive learning media as a means to enhance educational outcomes and to allocate resources accordingly. This may include funding for technological tools, teacher training programs, and the development of comprehensive curricula that incorporate interactive elements.

Additionally, the research underscores the need for policymakers to establish guidelines and standards for the integration of technology in education. By providing clear frameworks for schools,

policymakers can help ensure that interactive learning media are used effectively and equitably, maximizing their benefits for all students. This approach can promote consistency in educational practices across districts, contributing to improved educational outcomes at a broader scale.

The implications of this research extend directly to student outcomes, as the use of interactive learning media has the potential to enhance both academic performance and personal interest in science. By fostering a greater engagement with biology, these tools can inspire students to pursue further studies in the sciences, ultimately contributing to a more scientifically literate society.

Moreover, as students become more actively involved in their learning through interactive media, they may develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills that are essential for success in the 21st century. These skills not only prepare students for academic challenges but also equip them for future careers in a rapidly evolving job market.

Limitations

While this research provides valuable insights into the influence of interactive learning media on students' learning interest in biology, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations within the research design, sample size, and methodology that may affect the generalizability of the results.

One notable limitation is the quasi-experimental nature of the study, which lacks random assignment of participants to experimental and control groups. This design choice can introduce potential biases, as students self-select into classes or schools that may already exhibit differences in teaching quality, student motivation, or prior academic performance. As a result, the observed effects of interactive learning media may be influenced by these confounding variables rather than the media itself. Randomized controlled trials would provide stronger evidence of causality and enhance the reliability of the findings.

The sample size of approximately 200 students, while adequate for preliminary analysis, may limit the generalizability of the results. A larger, more diverse sample drawn from multiple geographic locations and varying socio-economic backgrounds would strengthen the external validity of the study. By including a broader representation of students, the findings could be more confidently applied to different educational contexts and populations. Additionally, differences in school resources, teacher expertise, and curricular standards across regions may further influence the outcomes, suggesting the need for caution when extrapolating results to wider settings.

Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported measures for interest and engagement can present methodological challenges. Students may have varying levels of awareness about their own learning interests and may respond in socially desirable ways, potentially leading to biased data. Complementary data collection methods, such as behavioral observations or analysis of engagement metrics, could provide a more nuanced understanding of student interactions with interactive learning media.

Additionally, while the study includes qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, the subjective nature of qualitative data analysis may introduce researcher bias in interpreting responses. Employing multiple coders and triangulating data sources could mitigate this risk and enhance the robustness of the qualitative findings.

Comparison of Research Results with Previous Studies

The findings of this research on the influence of interactive learning media on students' learning interest in biology present a compelling narrative that aligns with, and in some cases expands upon, previous studies in the field of educational technology and student engagement. By contextualizing these results within the broader landscape of existing literature, we can gain insights into the implications of interactive learning tools for enhancing educational outcomes.

A substantial body of research has consistently highlighted the positive impact of interactive learning media on student achievement. For instance, studies by Sitzmann (2011) and Zheng et al. (2016) have demonstrated that computer-based learning environments tend to yield higher academic performance compared to traditional methods. These findings resonate with the current study, which revealed that students who engaged with interactive biology resources exhibited significant gains in

academic performance and learning interest, corroborating the notion that technology-enhanced learning can lead to improved educational outcomes.

Moreover, previous investigations, such as those conducted by Klopfer and Squire (2008), have focused on the effectiveness of specific interactive tools, such as simulations and games, in fostering deeper understanding of complex concepts. The current research aligns with these studies by confirming that students using interactive media for biology lessons reported enhanced comprehension of intricate biological processes. This suggests a common thread across various subject areas, reinforcing the idea that interactive tools are effective in making challenging content more accessible and engaging.

While the current study supports the prevailing understanding of the benefits of interactive learning media, it also offers unique contributions by focusing specifically on junior high school biology education. Much of the existing literature has concentrated on higher education or other subjects such as mathematics and language arts, leaving a gap in understanding the implications for middle school science education. This study fills that gap by illustrating how interactive media can be tailored to capture the interest of younger students, thereby promoting engagement in science from an early age.

Additionally, the emphasis on the role of teacher training and support in successfully integrating interactive media into the classroom is another area where this study extends existing research. While previous studies have noted the importance of teacher involvement, the current research highlights specific strategies for professional development that can enhance educators' effectiveness in using technology. This focus on practical implementation provides valuable insights for schools aiming to harness the full potential of interactive tools.

The alignment of this study's findings with previous research underscores the growing consensus regarding the benefits of interactive learning media. However, it also calls for further exploration into the specific factors that influence the effectiveness of these tools in various educational contexts. Future studies could investigate the long-term impacts of interactive learning media on student achievement, explore variations across different subjects and age groups, and assess the most effective forms of teacher training to maximize the benefits of technology in education.

4. CONCLUSION

This research has explored the profound impact of interactive learning media on students' learning interest in biology subjects within junior high schools, revealing compelling insights that underscore the transformative potential of educational technology. By investigating how interactive tools such as simulations, virtual labs, and educational games influence student engagement and academic performance, this study has contributed valuable findings to the field of educational research. The findings of this research demonstrate that students exposed to interactive learning media exhibit significantly higher levels of engagement and motivation in biology education. Through hands-on exploration and visualization of biological concepts, students not only improve their understanding of complex topics but also develop a deeper appreciation for the relevance and applicability of science in their lives. This heightened interest in biology is reflected in improved academic performance, as evidenced by higher post-test scores among students who utilized interactive tools compared to those taught through traditional methods. Moreover, the qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions underscore the role of interactive media in fostering collaborative learning environments and empowering students to take an active role in their education. Teachers also report enhanced classroom dynamics and increased student participation, highlighting the transformative potential of integrating technology into pedagogical practices. The implications of this research extend to educational practice by advocating for the widespread adoption of interactive learning media in junior high school biology curricula. Educators are encouraged to leverage technology to create dynamic and engaging learning experiences that cater to diverse learning styles and foster critical thinking skills. Professional development programs should prioritize training teachers in the effective integration of interactive tools, ensuring that educators have the knowledge and resources to maximize

the benefits of educational technology. At the policy level, the findings underscore the need for strategic investments in educational technology and infrastructure. Policymakers are urged to allocate resources for the development and implementation of interactive learning resources in schools, thereby promoting equitable access to quality education. Additionally, policies should support research-based practices that enhance student engagement and academic achievement through innovative teaching methods.

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