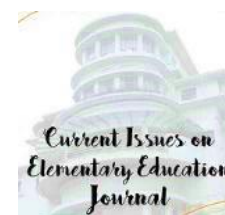




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Efforts to improve the understanding of mathematical concepts in the draft material on base fractions using Realistic Mathematics Education for 4th grade elementary school students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the understanding of fundamental fraction concepts among fourth-grade elementary students through the Realistic Mathematic Education (RME) model. This research utilized a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach involving 37 fourth-grade students in Cimahi as participants. The sample was selected due to its specific characteristics, particularly the difficulty students faced in grasping fraction concepts at a deeper level. Data collection methods included tests, observation sheets, interviews, and questionnaires. The data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative descriptive analysis, supported by Microsoft Excel. The findings revealed a notable enhancement in students' understanding of fraction concepts, with the average student score rising from 76.3 in Cycle I to 88.2 in Cycle II. This study concludes that the implementation of the RME model, coupled with innovative concrete materials, effectively improves students' comprehension of fraction concepts in elementary school, as demonstrated by an increase in the passing rate from 45% to 81%.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to comprehend mathematical concepts, particularly fractions, is a crucial skill that elementary school students are expected to develop optimally (Royani, 2022). Previous research indicates that students should ideally grasp the concept of fractions both concretely and abstractly through an engaging and contextual learning process. Gravemeijer (2021) asserts that in the Realistic Mathematics Education (RME) approach, mathematical understanding should emerge from realistic situations that enable students to construct their own mathematical knowledge. Furthermore, Van den Heuvel-Panhuizen (2020) emphasizes that incorporating everyday contexts can enhance students' understanding of fractions, ensuring that they grasp the concept not only procedurally but also conceptually.

Field observations indicate that students' grasp of the fundamental concept of fractions remains inadequate. A study by Widyastuti (2021) revealed that many students struggle to understand fractions, especially in different forms of representation, such as comparisons or visual formats. Similarly, research conducted by Sumarmo (2020) found that most students view fractions primarily as components of arithmetic operations, rather than as a comprehensive and integrated concept. Furthermore, Lestari's (2022) research highlights that numerous students face challenges in connecting fractions to real-life situations, suggesting that mathematics learning tends to remain abstract and disconnected from students' everyday experiences.

Field observations reveal a disconnect between ideal expectations and actual outcomes. For instance, despite the implementation of a contextual approach, many students continue to struggle with their understanding of fractions. Research conducted by Kurniawan (2023) indicates that students frequently find themselves confused when tasked with applying fractional concepts to real-world problems. This suggests that while the learning model has incorporated realistic elements, significant challenges remain in its practical application. Furthermore, a study by Priyono (2024) highlights that teachers often do not effectively leverage real-life contexts, which should be fundamental to Realistic Mathematics Education (RME), leaving students with ongoing difficulties in grasping the concept of fractions.

To address this issue, the Realistic Mathematics Education (RME) approach needs to be enhanced and adapted with learning strategies that prioritize the use of innovative concrete materials relevant to students' everyday experiences. Rizal (2023) found in his research that utilizing familiar concrete media can significantly improve students' comprehension of fraction concepts. This supports the findings of Soedjadi (2022), who noted that when students can perceive a direct connection between mathematics and their daily lives, their grasp of abstract concepts like fractions becomes much stronger. Furthermore, Novitasari (2021) indicated that incorporating relevant and innovative concrete media can effectively enhance student engagement and understanding.

The learning model that incorporates the RME approach, using innovative concrete media commonly found in everyday life, offers several advantages (Lugina & Artiani, 2022). According to Putri (2021), the use of familiar concrete objects facilitates students' ability to visualize mathematical concepts, such as fractions. This method enables students to establish direct connections between their personal experiences and the material being studied. Wijaya (2023) discovered that incorporating real objects into lessons increases student engagement and motivation. Furthermore, Sari (2024) noted that the use of concrete media allows teachers to present material in a more relevant and comprehensible manner, ultimately enhancing students' overall grasp of mathematical concepts.

This study presents several innovative aspects that distinguish it from previous research. While earlier studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of concrete media in enhancing mathematical understanding (Rizky, 2022), this study specifically explores how innovative concrete media, commonly encountered in everyday life, can improve elementary school students' comprehension of fraction concepts. Additionally, this research will compare the effectiveness of these concrete media with the more abstract traditional RME (Realistic Mathematics Education) approach (Wardani, 2021). Another unique contribution of this study is a comprehensive analysis of how various innovative concrete media can be optimally utilized within the framework of realistic mathematics learning—an area that has not been extensively addressed in prior research (Ananda, 2023).

This study will examine the impact of utilizing innovative concrete media integrated with the Realistic Mathematic Education (RME) learning model on fourth-grade elementary students' comprehension of basic fraction concepts. It is anticipated that this research will significantly enhance the quality of mathematics education in elementary schools, particularly in relation to understanding fractions.

2. METHODS

Research methods

The research method employed in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR). This approach was selected because it enables researchers to engage directly in the classroom to enhance ongoing learning practices. As noted by Arikunto (2019), CAR is a type of research conducted by teachers within their own classrooms that involves self-reflection, aimed at improving performance and boosting student learning outcomes. The methodology of this study adheres to the fundamental principles of classroom action research, which include planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The design follows the PTK model established by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart (as referenced by Ardiawan & Wiradnyana, 2019), with stages outlined in the accompanying chart.

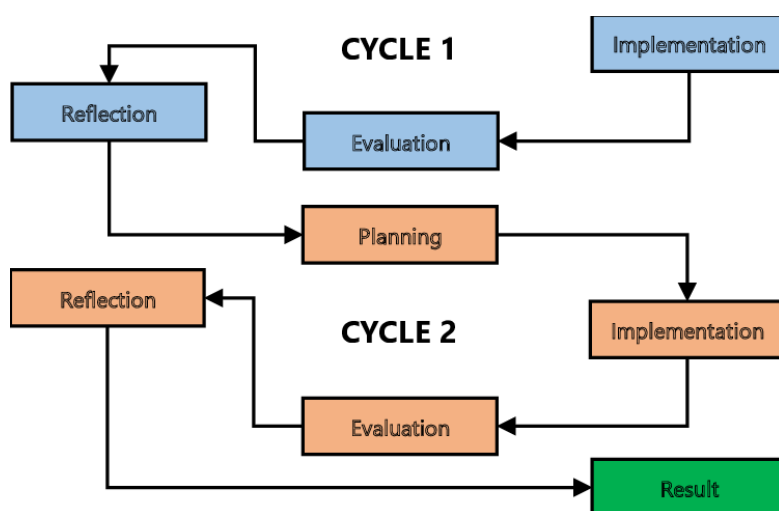


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research (CAR)

Based on the outlined cycle, the researcher will undertake the following stages: (1) Conduct an initial reflection to gather data aligned with the research objectives. This data will be sourced from teacher interviews and student observations. (2) Develop a plan to address and enhance student grades or attitudes by creating learning tools such as Teaching Modules, LKPD (Student Worksheets), instructional materials, learning media, as well as pretest and

posttest questions, along with suitable evaluation questions. (3) Execute the established plans to implement the necessary improvements. (4) Engage in observation activities to collect data on the outcomes of these actions. (5) Finally, carry out reflection activities to analyze and interpret all results of the completed tasks.

Location and Samples

This research was carried out at an elementary school in Cimahi, involving 4th grade students, with a total of 37 participants. This particular class was selected due to its characteristics that align with the research focus, specifically the challenges students face in achieving a deep understanding of the concept of fractions.

Data collection technique

Data collection techniques employed in this study included observation, testing, and interviews. Observations were carried out during the learning process to examine how students interacted with concrete media and how their understanding of fractions evolved. The observation instrument was adapted from the principles of Realistic Mathematic Education (RME) developed by Gravemeijer (2004). Tests were administered both before and after the intervention to assess the improvements in students' comprehension of fractions. The testing instrument was designed in accordance with the relevant mathematics curriculum and validated by experts. Additionally, interviews were conducted with both students and teachers to gather their perspectives on the effectiveness of using concrete media in instruction.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative descriptive analysis techniques. Qualitative data from observations and interviews underwent analysis through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). The purpose of this analysis is to identify patterns of student interaction and understanding throughout the learning process. Quantitative data derived from test results were evaluated using descriptive statistics to assess the improvement in student understanding from pre-action to post-action. The comparison of average pre-test and post-test scores will serve as a measure of the intervention's effectiveness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The data collected from the implementation of actions over two cycles and two meetings indicates a notable increase in the understanding of draft base student fractions. This improvement is evidenced by the comparative analysis of the average values obtained.

Table 1Result Data Study

	Cycle I	Cycle II
Average	76.3	88.2
Mark Lowest	55	65
Mark Highest	80	90
Passed	17	30
Not pass	20	7
Pass Percentage	45%	81%

The data presented in the table indicates a notable improvement in the average learning outcomes for students in mathematics, specifically regarding multiplication material. In Cycle I, the average score was recorded at 76.3, which rose to 88.2 in Cycle II. This progression reflects the positive impact of the implemented instructional strategies on student learning.

Cycle I

Cycle I was conducted on Thursday, September 2, 2024. The stages of this cycle are outlined as follows:

1. Planning Stage

During Cycle 1, action planning was carried out, which included the preparation of learning tools such as the RPP (Lesson Plan), LKPD (Student Worksheets), and concrete learning media. Evaluation instruments, including pretest and posttest questions, were also developed.

2. Implementation Stage

The actions were implemented according to the established plan. This involved the learning process utilizing the Realistic Mathematics Education (RME) model along with concrete media. The learning activities were designed to engage students and enhance their understanding of fractions through real-life contexts.

3. Observation Stage

Observations were conducted throughout the implementation to monitor student activities and their engagement in the learning process. The observation data captured how students responded to the use of concrete media and how effectively they applied the concepts taught to solve problems.

In the educational process, students are presented with evaluation questions designed to assess their cognitive abilities. These evaluations encompass key indicators of conceptual understanding, including: 1) Interpreting, 2) Exemplifying, 3) Classifying, 4) Summarizing, 5) Inferring, 6) Comparing, and 7) Explaining. By integrating these indicators into cognitive assessment evaluations, we have collected data regarding students' cognitive scores, as outlined below:

Table 2 Value Data Cognitive (Knowledge)

	Cycle I
Average	76.3
Mark Lowest	55
Mark Highest	80
Passed	17
Not pass	20
Pass Percentage	45%

The data indicates that, following the implementation of action cycle 1, the cognitive scores of 37 students resulted in an average of 76.3, with a minimum score of 55 and a maximum score of 80. Of these students, 17 achieved graduation status, resulting in a graduation rate of 45%.

In the classroom learning process, students participate in activities that address the psychomotor domain or skill development. To assess students' skills in delivering presentations or discussing results, three indicators are evaluated: 1) Volume of sound, 2) Fluency, and 3) Pronunciation. The results obtained are as follows:

Table 3. Psychomotor (Skills) Score Data

	Skill 1	Skill II	Skill III
Total score	3.3	3.3	3.2
Average score	82	80.4	81
Qualification	B = Good	B = Good	B = Good

The qualification evaluation has been derived from a comprehensive assessment of the established criteria.

A (average score >90 = Very Good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

The data from the acquisition results indicates that for psychomotor skills, students scored a total of 3.3 for Skill I, 3.3 for Skill II, and 3.2 for Skill III. The average scores achieved were as follows: Skill I received a value of 82, qualifying as B (Good); Skill II scored 80.4, also qualifying as B (Good); and Skill III attained a value of 81, which falls under the same qualification of B (Good).

In the classroom learning process, students are evaluated based on the affective domain (attitude) using the following assessment indicators: 1) Collaboration with group members, 2) Self-confidence while presenting their work in front of the class, and 3) A sense of responsibility in completing their assigned tasks. The results reflecting students' affective attitudes are summarized in the following table:

Table 4 Value Data Affective (Attitude)

	Believe Self	Cooperate	Responsible answer
Average score	3.2	3.6	3.8
Average value	81	89	96
Qualification	B (Good)	B (Good)	A (Very Good)

The data presented indicate that the acquisition mark has a positive impact on the indicators related to self-belief and collaboration, with the qualification rated as good. Additionally, the indicator for responsible responses has been assessed with a qualification of very good. These qualifications are derived from the established evaluation criteria outlined in the following sections.

A (average score >90 = Very good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

Observations of student performance during classroom learning are conducted with specific objectives in mind to understand student development throughout the learning process. The assessment guidelines are as follows: Score 1 indicates that a student is performing inadequately; Score 2 reflects a level of performance that is sufficient; Score 3 indicates good performance; and Score 4 represents very good performance. The evaluation results are summarized as follows:

Table 5 Data on Student Learning Observation Results

Amount Student	37
Amount score	57
Average score	3.2
Final Score	79
Qualification	C = Enough Good

The data presents the results of observations conducted to assess acquisition outcomes among 37 students. These students received a total score of 57, with an average score of 3.2, culminating in a final score of 79. This performance corresponds to a qualification of C (Sufficient). The evaluation qualifications are derived from established assessment criteria, which are detailed as follows:

A (average score >90 = Very Good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

Following the implementation of the classroom learning process, students were administered a questionnaire consisting of 10 indicators designed to assess their experiences with the Realistic Mathematical Education (RME) learning model. The questionnaire required students to select their evaluation responses based on the following scale: Score 1 - Strongly Disagree (STS), Score 2 - Disagree (TS), Score 3 - Agree (S), and Score 4 - Strongly Agree (SS). As for the results questionnaire response, students obtained data as follows:

Table 6. Student Response Questionnaire Result Data

Amount Respondents	37
Total score	32.9
Average score	3.3
Score end	82.2
Qualification	B = Good

The data show total score for questionnaire response students is 32.9 and the average score is 3.3 with a score end 82.2 which shows qualification B (Good).

Qualification evaluation obtained from criteria assessment following:

A (average score >90 = Very Good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

1. Stage Reflection

Following the completion of the actions in Cycle 1, a reflective analysis will be conducted to assess the outcomes achieved. This stage involves a thorough examination of the results obtained from observations and assessments administered. The purpose of this reflection is to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented actions and to identify any necessary improvements for the upcoming cycle.

Cycle II

Cycle I I was carried out on Monday, 02 September 2024. The stages in this cycle are as follows:

1. Planning Stage

In Cycle II, we will undertake action planning, which involves the development of essential learning tools, including the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), Student Activity Sheets (LKPD), and effective learning media. Additionally, we will prepare evaluation instruments, such as pretest and posttest questions, to assess student progress and learning outcomes.

2. Stage Implementation

The actions outlined in the established plan have been executed effectively. This initiative focuses on the learning process utilizing the Realistic Mathematics Education (RME) model, along with various concrete media from Cycle I. The learning activities are designed to actively engage students, promoting a deeper understanding of fractions through real-world contexts.

3. Stage Observation

Throughout the implementation process, comprehensive observations were conducted regarding student activities and their engagement in the learning experience. The observation data encompasses students' responses to the use of concrete materials, as well as their application of the concepts taught in addressing the presented problems.

In the educational process, students are presented with evaluation questions designed to assess their cognitive abilities, encompassing various indicators of conceptual understanding: 1) Interpreting, 2) Exemplifying, 3) Classifying, 4) Summarizing, 5) Inferring, 6) Comparing, and 7) Explaining. By integrating these indicators into cognitive assessment evaluations, we have gathered data regarding students' cognitive scores, which is outlined as follows:

Table 7 Value Data Cognitive (Knowledge)

	Cycle II
Average	88.2
Mark Lowest	65
Mark Highest	90
Passed	30
Not pass	7
Pass Percentage	81%

The data indicates that, following the implementation of the initiative in Cycle II, the cognitive performance of 37 students resulted in an average score of 88.2. The scores ranged from a minimum of 6.5 to a maximum of 9.0. Notably, 30 out of the 37 students achieved passing grades, resulting in a graduation rate of 81%.

In the classroom learning process, students engage in activities designed to develop skills within the psychomotor domain. To assess students' abilities in delivering or presenting discussions, three key indicators are evaluated: 1) Volume of sound, 2) Fluency, and 3) Pronunciation. The resulting data is as follows:

Table 8. Psychomotor (Skills) Score Data

	Skill 1	Skill II	Skill III
Total score	3.5	3.4	3.2
Average score	92	89.3	81
Qualification	A = Very Good	B = Good	B = Good

Qualification evaluation obtained from criteria evaluation following:

A (average score >90 = Very Good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

Based on the data collected from the assessment of psychomotor skills, the results indicate the following: for Skill I, a total score of 3.5 was achieved; for Skill II, the score was 3.4; and for Skill III, the score was 3.2. The average scores for these skills are as follows: Skill I received a score of 92, qualifying it as 'A' (Very Good); Skill II achieved a score of 89.3, qualifying it as 'B' (Good); and Skill III received a score of 81, which qualifies for further evaluation. B (Good).

During the learning process within the classroom setting, student assessment encompasses the affective domain, particularly focusing on attitudes. The assessment indicators are as follows: 1) Collaboration with group members, 2) Self-confidence displayed while presenting work outcomes to the class, and 3) A sense of responsibility in executing assigned tasks. The evaluation of students' attitudes, as reflected in the results, can be found in the accompanying table.

Table 9. Affective Value Data (Attitude)

	Believe Self	Cooperate	Responsible answer
Average score	3.3	3.7	3.6
Average value	83	91	89
Qualification	B (Good)	A (Very Good)	A (Good)

The data presented indicate the effectiveness of acquisition marks, highlighting the following indicators: a self-belief in obtaining qualifications rated as good, a collaborative approach resulting in qualifications rated as very good, and a responsible response yielding qualifications rated as good. The qualifications have been derived from the following evaluation criteria:

A (average score >90 = Very good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

In observing student performance during classroom learning, we aim to assess student development throughout the educational process. The assessment guidelines are as follows:

- Score 1: The student demonstrates insufficient engagement in the learning process.
- Score 2: The student demonstrates adequate engagement in the learning process.
- Score 3: The student demonstrates good engagement in the learning process.
- Score 4: The student demonstrates exemplary engagement in the learning process.

The evaluation results are as follows:

Table 10. Results Observation Learning Student

Amount Student	37
Amount score	58
Average score	3.2
Final Score	81
Qualification	B = Good

The data presents the findings from an assessment conducted on 37 students. The results indicate that the students achieved a total score of 58, with an average score of 3.2, culminating in a final score of 81, which corresponds to a qualification of B (Good). The evaluation criteria for this qualification are based on established assessment standards.

A (average score >90 = Very Good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

Following the implementation of classroom learning, students were administered a questionnaire consisting of ten indicators designed to assess their feelings regarding the learning process conducted through the Realistic Mathematical Education (RME) model. The questionnaire required students to provide their evaluations by selecting responses according to the following scale: Score 1 - Strongly Disagree (STS), Score 2 - Disagree (TS), Score 3 - Agree (S), and Score 4 - Strongly Agree (SS).

As for the results questionnaire response students obtained data as follows:

Table 11 Result Data Questionnaire Response Student

Amount Respondents	37
Total score	33.8
Average score	3.3
Score end	84.6
Qualification	B = Good

The data indicates that the total score on the questionnaire response from students is 33.8, with an average score of 3.3 and a final score of 84.6. This assessment places the students in the qualification category of B (Good). The qualification evaluation is derived from the established criteria utilized for assessment.

A (average score >90 = Very Good)

B (average score >80 = Good)

C (average score >70 = Good Enough)

4. Stage Reflection

Following the conclusion of action cycle 2, a reflective analysis will be conducted to assess the outcomes achieved. This stage involves a detailed examination of the observations and assessments collected during the cycle. The purpose of this reflection is to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented actions and to identify any necessary improvements for subsequent cycles.

3.2 Discussion

The data presented in Table 1 demonstrates a notable enhancement in students' understanding of basic fraction concepts following the implementation of the Realistic Mathematic Education (RME) learning model, complemented by the use of concrete media. The average student score increased from 76.3 in Cycle I to 88.2 in Cycle II, while the passing percentage rose significantly from 45% to 81%. This result is consistent with the findings of Gravemeijer (2021), who emphasizes that the RME approach allows students to independently cultivate their understanding of mathematical concepts through realistic and contextual scenarios. Additionally, the use of RME-based teaching materials has effectively improved students' mathematical communication skills, as noted by Rabbani and Muftianti (2020).

Despite a notable improvement in students' comprehension, some challenges remained evident throughout the learning process. Widyastuti (2021) observed that certain students continued to struggle with applying the concept of fractions across various representations, including visual and comparative formats. This struggle is reflected in their scores; the lowest mark in Cycle I was 55, which increased to 65 in Cycle II. Furthermore, Murni and Rabbani (2019) pointed out that the Realistic Mathematics Education (RME) approach enhances students' metaphorical thinking skills, which are essential for understanding abstract concepts such as fractions.

Sumarmo's (2020) research highlighted that students' understanding of fractions is often limited to arithmetic operations, hindering their ability to perceive fractions as a broader, more integrated concept. This limitation is evident in students who struggle to connect fractions to real-life situations, which should be a key objective of implementing the RME model. Supporting this perspective, Murni, Ruqoyyah, and Rabbani (2021) found that teaching materials developed using the RME approach can enhance students' mathematical communication skills, which are crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of concepts.

In contrast, the use of concrete materials that relate to everyday life has proven to significantly enhance student engagement in the learning process. Supporting the findings of Soedjadi (2022), when students identify a direct connection between mathematics and their daily experiences, their understanding of abstract concepts, such as fractions, improves considerably. This is reflected in the increased average scores across cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains, all of which indicate positive outcomes, with the majority of students attaining qualifications of "Good" and "Very Good."

5. CONCLUSION

- a. This study significantly deepened the understanding of fundamental fraction concepts among fourth-grade elementary students by implementing the Realistic Mathematics Education (RME) learning model, supported by the use of innovative concrete materials. The findings demonstrated an improvement in students' average scores, which increased from 76.3 in Cycle I to 88.2 in Cycle II, while the passing percentage rose from 45% to 81%.
- b. The RME learning model has demonstrated its effectiveness in assisting students in linking fraction concepts to real-life situations, thereby enhancing their overall understanding of the subject. This success is further supported by the research conducted by Gravemeijer (2021) and Soedjadi (2022), which highlights that a contextual approach and the incorporation of concrete materials can significantly improve students' mathematical comprehension.

- c. This study indicates that the effectiveness of RME implementation is significantly influenced by teachers' ability to integrate concrete media with real-life contexts. The challenges students encounter in applying the concept of fractions across different representations suggest that teachers require additional training to enhance their use of concrete media in instruction.
- d. The success of this research is bolstered by the presence of adequate facilities and infrastructure, including relevant and innovative concrete resources. For future research, it is advisable to further align the facilities and infrastructure with the needs of students and the curriculum, as well as to incorporate more advanced learning technologies to enhance the educational experience.
- e. It is advisable to conduct additional research to refine and evaluate different types of concrete media that can be incorporated into the RME model. Moreover, it would be beneficial to investigate the effectiveness of this approach across other mathematical concepts. Furthermore, more comprehensive studies are required to understand how teacher training impacts the successful implementation of the RME learning model in diverse educational settings.

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