

# Enhancing Junior High School Students' Learning Outcomes through a Hybrid Approach of Virtual and Real Experimental Methods on Static Electric Material

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## Abstract

The virtual experimental method is not a substitute for real experiments in the laboratory, however, the two methods complement each other to facilitate the learning of physics in the classroom. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, there has not yet been found any research in terms of analyzing the effectiveness of the combination of these two methods. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of the combination of virtual and real experimental methods on improving the learning outcomes of class IX students at junior high school. The research method used is one group pre-test post-test design. The research sample was 52 students consisting of 3 classes with 14 students in each class. The sampling technique used is random simple sampling. The research instruments are lesson plans, worksheets, and test instruments. The research instrument was declared valid and reliable before being used. The data analysis techniques used were the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, n-gain, and Kruskal Wallis test because the prerequisite tests for normality and homogeneity of variance were not met. The findings of this study are that there is a significant increase in student learning outcomes in the moderate category before and after learning, and there is no difference in student learning outcomes in the 3 classes after the application of the learning method. Thus, the combination of virtual and real experimental methods is effective in improving the learning outcomes of class IX students.

**Keywords:** Learning outcome, Virtual laboratory, Real laboratory, Static electricity, Physics learning

## 1. Introduction

Natural science (IPA) including physics is a systematic way to understand nature, and master knowledge, facts, concepts, principles, and laws through the scientific method (Religia & Achmadi, 2017). Science is not only mastering knowledge in the form of facts, concepts, and principles but also the process of discovery. Mastery and understanding of scientific concepts cannot be separated from laboratory experiments (Zulkifli et al., 2022).

Physics learning aims to train critical thinking, creative and problem-solving skills. Teachers are required to design creative learning models and methods that can be applied in the classroom (Siswadi et al., 2018). Physics learning in the classroom to teach physics as a product in the form of facts, concepts, principles, theories, and laws can be conducted through experimental-based learning with scientific steps.

Experimental-based physics learning provides opportunities for students as active thinkers, to formulate

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and solve problems like scientists, thereby increasing mastery of scientific concepts (Zulkifli et al., 2022). Experimental learning activities can enhance students' learning motivation and active learning, improve skills, scientific attitudes, and learning outcomes (Azhar et al., 2021).

The application of experimental methods in learning physics is combined with various approaches, models, and learning methods. For example, problem-based learning (Aziz et al., 2015), quantum learning model (Arifin et al., 2016), cooperative learning model (Juraini et al., 2017), inquiry learning model (Wahyuni et al., 2017), and contextual learning model (Wati et al., 2021); (Huda & Hikmawati, 2019). However, teachers still encounter problems in their application, namely the lack of experimental tools and limited time to prepare experiments (Taibu & Mataka, 2021).

Current technological advance provides various virtual experimental innovations such as physics education technology (PhET) as a solution for teacher problem. The application of a virtual PhET simulation laboratory is effective in increasing the ability of prospective physics teacher students to solve problems on direct current material (Yuliati et al., 2018), junior high school students' science process skills on temperature & heat material (Haryadi & Pujiastuti, 2020), conceptual understanding, motivation and creativity of junior high school students on the material of the solar system (Prima et al., 2018) (Astutik & Prahani, 2018) (Yunzal, Jr. & Casinillo, 2020), and students science process skills (Taibu & Mataka, 2021). According to Evangelou and Kotsis (Evangelou & Kotsis, 2019), the combination of PhET simulation virtual experiments and real experiments is more effective in improving student learning outcomes than only using the one of them.

PhET simulation has good accuracy in presenting models and principles of physics (Finkelstein et al., 2005). The use of PhET simulation through experimental-based learning supports students' creativity to be actively involved in learning and understanding physics concepts (Perkins et al., 2006). The PhET simulation virtual laboratory is easy to use and accessible anywhere at any time.

The use of virtual laboratories in physics experiments does not eliminate real laboratories but complements the shortcomings of real laboratories. Experiments using virtual laboratories are able to simulate conditions that are not visible to the eye, presenting forms of macroscopic, microscopic, and graphic representations of abstract physics concepts so that they are easy to be understood (Yuliati et al., 2018)(Ceberio et al., 2016). Unfortunately, research that examines the effectiveness of the combination of a virtual laboratory simulation of PhET and a real laboratory in physics learning has not yet been widely carried out.

Static electricity is a basic concept used to understand more complex electromagnetic concepts. Mastery of student learning on static electricity material determines the success of students in understanding more complex electromagnetic material. However, students have difficulties on understanding the concepts of charge and electric circuits (Stefanidou et al., 2019). Students have difficulty connecting abstract physics concepts with real phenomena that occur in everyday life. As a result, student learning outcomes are low.

Student learning outcomes in physics subjects that are still low are the attention of teachers and the world of education today (Putranta & Jumadi, 2019). There are external and internal factors that determine student learning outcomes (Al-Darmaki, 2004). Factors from outside the students are for example the learning media used by the teacher (Sahronih et al., 2019). Meanwhile, from within students, for example, motivation, emotional intelligence, intellectual intelligence (Wayan Jati Adnyana, Ketut Suma, 2017), parental involvement, and student social attitudes (Saraswati et al., 2019).

The results of observations of physics learning in class IX students of SMP Negeri Liman are students who have difficulty understanding physics concepts, low learning outcomes, students are less active during learning and the highest is 50% of students who complete learning at each meeting. Thus, it is necessary for the creativity of teachers to facilitate students in learning in order to improve their learning outcomes.

The effectiveness of the combination of virtual and real laboratory experimental methods is measured by the significant difference in student learning outcomes before and after learning at the significance level  $\alpha = 5\%$ , the average increase in student learning outcomes in the medium category is based on normalized n-gain calculations and there is no significant difference in average learning outcomes between treatment classes. This research aims to analyzing the effectiveness of the hybrid approach of virtual and real experimental laboratory and real laboratory in improving learning outcomes in the topic of static electricity.

## 2. Methods

The research method used is a quantitative method, one group pretest-posttest.

**Table 1** One group pretest-posttest design

Pretest	Treatment	Post-test
O1	X	O2

O1: Pre-test  
O2: Posttest  
X: Combination of virtual and real experimental methods

Pretest is given before the implementation of learning through a combination of virtual and real laboratory experimental methods. The time allocation for pretest and post-test was the same, namely 90 minutes. The learning outcomes test instrument used questions about physics concepts developed by Hewit (2008).

The population of this study was grade IX students of SMP Negeri Liman (junior high school) in East Nusa Tenggara Indonesia, consisting of 3 classes. Students in all classes have the same academic ability. The research sample was selected by random sampling technique. The population consists of 3 classes, namely Class IXA, Class IXB and Class IXC with 14 students in each class. So, the total sample is 42 students.

This research begins with the development of learning tools such as lesson plans, student worksheets and learning outcomes test instruments. The learning outcomes test instrument used 4 number essay questions. The learning outcomes test instrument was adapted from the comprehension questions developed by Hewit (2008). In the following table, the validity and reliability of the instrument are presented.

**Table 2** Validity and reliability of lesson plans, teaching materials and learning outcomes test instruments

Learning Media	Validity	Category	Reliability	Category
Lesson Plan	3.8	valid	86.5%	reliable
Student Worksheet	3.7	valid	85.0%	reliable
Test instrument	3.8	valid	88.0%	reliable

Table 2 shows the validity and reliability of all research instruments. The results of the validity and reliability test of the instrument showed that the RPS, LKS, and test instruments were valid with a maximum score of 4 and reliable at a maximum score of 100%. Thus, the RPS, LKS and learning outcomes test instruments are feasible to use. The stages of implementing learning with a combination of virtual and real experimental methods are: 1) apperception, 2) formulating questions, 3) students are divided into groups, 4) experiments using PhET and real simulations, 5) discussions and compiling reports, 6) presentations, 7) conclusion. The pretest was carried out at the beginning of the meeting and the post-test was carried out at the end of the last meeting. The pre-test and post-test questions used are the same.

The data analysis technique of student learning outcomes used paired sample t-test or non-parametric analysis of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. Paired sample t-test was carried out if the pre-test and post-test score normality assumptions were met. On the other hand, if the assumption of normality is not met, non-

parametric analysis will be used. The n-gain test equation (Hake, 2009) is used to determine the increase in student learning outcomes as follows:

$$n - \text{gain} = \frac{\text{Sposttest} - \text{Spretest}}{\text{Ideal score} - \text{Spretest}}$$

**Table 3** Interpretation of n-gain

n-gain value	Category	Conclusion
n-gain $\geq$ 0.70	Tall	Very effective
0.3 < n-gain < 0.70	Currently	effective
n-gain $\leq$ 0.3	low	Less effective

One-way ANOVA test was used to determine the significant difference in the average results in group 1, group 2 and group 3. The ANOVA test was used if the normality and homogeneity assumptions were met. On the other hand, if not, then the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test will be continued. Analysis of this data used IBM SPSS statistical software 25.

### 3. Results

Table 4 shows that the average learning outcomes of students in grades IXA, IXB and IXC before the implementation of combined virtual and real laboratory experimental methods, namely 30.33, 30.36, 33.93 respectively in low category and after learning the average of student learning outcomes increased with an average post-tests are 66.07, 66.97 and 71.43, in the range of values 0-100.

**Table 4** Descriptive statistics

Group	N	mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Class IXA	14	30.33	17,482
Pre-test Class IXB	14	30.36	22,315
Pre-test Class IXC	14	33.93	18,624
Post-test Class IXA	14	66.07	18,624
Post-test Class IXB	14	66.97	15,833
Post-test Class IXC	14	71.43	13,363

Table 5 describes the results of the normality test with Kolmogorov-Smirnov shows the significance value of the pre-test and post-test for classes IXA, IXB, and IXC < 0.05. It means that the pre-test and post-test data for classes IXA, IXB and IXC are not normally distributed. Thus, the statistical test of increasing learning outcomes for each class was followed by a non-parametric test, namely the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. Table 6 presents the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

**Table 5** Normality test

Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.	
Learning outcomes	Pretest Class IXA	.263	14	.009	.806	14	.006
	Posttest Class IXA	.306	14	.001	.773	14	.002
	Pretest Class IXB	.238	14	.031	.889	14	.079
	Posttest Class IXB	.285	14	.003	.771	14	.002
	Pretest Class IXC	.306	14	.001	.773	14	.002
	Posttest Class IXC	.391	14	.000	.713	14	.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 6 shows that: the negative rank or the difference (negative) between the average student learning outcomes for the pre-test and post-test in classes IXA, IXB, IXC is 0, both in the value of N, mean rank, and sum rank. This 0 value indicates no decrease (reduction) from the pre-test to post-test scores.

**Table 6** Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
Posttest Class IXA - Pretest Class IXA	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	14 <sup>b</sup>	7.50	105.00
	Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>		
Post Class IXB - Pretest Class IXB	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>d</sup>	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	14 <sup>e</sup>	7.50	105.00
	Ties	0 <sup>f</sup>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>		
Posttest Class IXC - Pretest Class IXC	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>g</sup>	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	14 <sup>h</sup>	7.50	105.00
	Ties	0 <sup>i</sup>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>		

Positive rank or difference (positive) between the average student learning outcomes for pre-test and post-test in class IXA, IXB, IXC. From the table, we can see that N for classes IXA, IXB, and IXC are all 14, meaning that 14 students in each class were experienced an increase in learning outcomes. The mean rank or the average increase is 7.50, while the number of positive ranks is 105. Ties are the similarity of pre-test and post-test scores. In table 3 the value of ties is 0, so it is said that the pre-test and post-test are not the same value.

**Table 7** Statistical test

	<b>Posttest Class A - Pretest Class A</b>	<b>Posttest Class B - Pretest Class B</b>	<b>Posttest Class C - Pretest Class C</b>
Z	-3,440 <sup>b</sup>	-3,440 <sup>b</sup>	-3,384 <sup>b</sup>
asyp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.001

### *Hypothesis I*

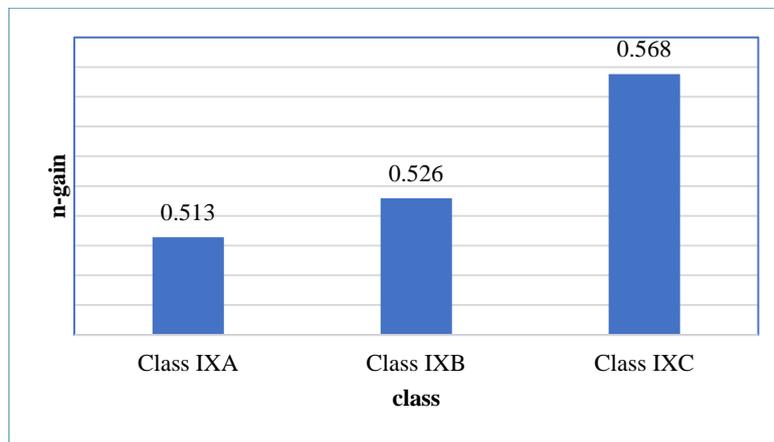
Table 7 shows the value of Asym.Sig (2-tailed) post-test – pretest of class A namely  $0.01 < 0.05$ , therefore  $H_{01}$  is rejected. This means that there is a positive and significant increase in student learning outcomes for class IXA at  $\alpha = 5\%$ .

### *Hypothesis II*

Table 7 shows the value of Asym.Sig (2-tailed) post-test – pretest of class B namely  $0.001 < 0.05$ , therefore  $H_{02}$  is rejected. This means that there is a positive and significant increase in student learning outcomes for class IXB at  $\alpha = 5\%$ .

### *Hypothesis III*

Table 7 shows the value of Asym.Sig (2-tailed) post-test – pretest of class C namely  $0.001 < 0.05$ , then  $H_{03}$  is rejected. This means that there is a positive and significant increase in student learning outcomes for class IXC at  $\alpha = 5\%$ .



**Fig. 1** N-gain Class IXA, IXB, and IXC

Fig. 1 shows the number of n-gain of students learning outcomes in grades IXA, IXB and IXC namely 0.513, 0.526, and 0.568 respectively. These values indicate that there is an increase in student learning outcomes for each class in the medium category.

**Table 8** Normality Test

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	class	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
Posttest	Class IXA	.388	14	.000	.684	14	.000
	Class IXB	.389	14	.000	.688	14	.000
	Class IXC	.369	14	.000	.639	14	.000

Based on table 7 about the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, it is shown that the obtained sig value of post-test class IXA, IXB, and IXC namely  $0.000 < 0.05$  indicate that the data is not normally distributed.

**Table 9** Test of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistics	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Sig.
Learning Outcomes	Based on Mean	2,548	2	39	.091
	Based on Median	2.186	2	39	.126
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.186	2	36,268	.127
	Based on trimmed mean	2,472	2	39	.098

Based on Table 9, the homogeneity test shown that the value of sig. is  $0.091 > 0.05$  therefore it can be concluded that the data is homogeneous. The results of the normality assumption test are not satisfied, on the other hand the homogeneity test is satisfied. Thus, the requirements of the parametric statistical test were not also satisfied, therefore the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test was applied in the next step. The results of the Kruskal Wallis test are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10** Kruskal Wallis test

	Post-test
Kruskal-Wallis H	.045
df	2
asypm. Sig.	.978

- a. Kruskal Wallis Test
- b. Grouping Variable: Class

Table 10 shows the value of Asymp. Sig is  $0.978 > 0.05$  so that  $H_0$  is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in student learning outcomes between class IXA, class IXB and class IXC at  $\alpha = 5\%$ .

#### 4. Discussion

Analysis of the research data showed that there was a positive increase in student learning outcomes from pre-test to post-test at  $\alpha = 5\%$ , with an average n-gain increase in 3 classes, namely 0.513, 0.526, and 0.568 in the medium category, and there was no difference in significant average learning outcomes between classes at  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Thus, the application of the experimental method of combining virtual and real laboratories effectively improves the learning outcomes of class IX students. There is a lack of research investigating the effects of using a combination of virtual and real laboratories on students' conceptual understanding. However, the results of several comparative studies between the two types of laboratories suggest that students' conceptual understanding tends to be higher and significantly different when they learn using virtual laboratories compared to real laboratories.

Nevertheless, there is a significant improvement in student's conceptual understanding (learning outcomes) of the material on direct current electricity among the groups that use both virtual and real laboratories, as revealed in the study by Faour et al. (Faour et al., 2018). This finding differs from the conclusion of Zulkifli et al. (Zulkifli et al., 2022) who found no significant difference in student's conceptual understanding (learning outcomes) between virtual and real laboratories in learning Hooke's law. Therefore, teachers should consider the characteristics of the material when selecting a suitable laboratory method, whether it be virtual, real, or a combination of both.

Based on the analysis of research data, it shows that the combination of virtual experimental methods is effective in improving student learning outcomes from pre-test to post-test. These results support the findings of Jaakkola et al. (2011) (Jaakkola et al., 2011) (Jaakkola et al., 2011) that students who are given learning using a combination of virtual and real experimental methods have a higher level of understanding than the virtual experimental method or the real experimental method only. Another study states that the combination of virtual and real experimental methods provides high support for students' conceptual understanding, and is effective in promoting the strengthening of physics concepts than the experimental method or the experimental method alone (Chini et al., 2012; Zacharia et al., 2008; Zacharia & de Jong, 2014; Wang & Tseng, 2018).

The improvement of student learning outcomes due to the combination of virtual and real laboratory experimental methods bridges the gap between concepts and theories. The use of virtual laboratories facilitates students observing the microscopic phenomena of charge transfer in static electricity and turns abstract phenomena into concrete ones (Wang & Tseng, 2018). A good understanding of microscopic phenomena makes it easier for students to abstract the concepts that underlie real phenomena (Jaakkola et al., 2011; Zacharia & Jong, n.d.). The use of virtual experimental methods provides understanding and experience of the topics that students learn about (Yuliati et al., 2018), creates a pleasant learning environment (Aljuhani et al., 2018), and makes students active in learning (Özcan et al., 2020). The experimental method of combining virtual and real laboratories can be applied to students and teachers as a solution to improve student learning outcomes.

The sample used in this study was grade IX junior high school students, in contrast to the research from Jaakola, et al. (2011) who were using a sample of elementary school students (Jaakkola et al., 2011), meanwhile, Zacharia and Jong using a research sample of university students (Zacharia & Jong, n.d.). Further research that can be carried out is by expanding the research sample, learning materials and experimental methods involving the control class.

## 5. Conclusions

The finding of this study indicates that the application of the experimental method of combining virtual and real laboratories effectively improves the learning outcomes of grade IX students. The average of n-gain increases at the medium category namely 0.513, 0.526 and 0.568 in three classes respectively. However, there was no significant difference in average learning outcomes among the classes. The study highlights the need for further research on the effects of using a combination of virtual and real laboratories on student's learning outcomes. The results of the study support previous research that showed a higher level of understanding among students who learn using a combination of virtual and real experimental methods. The combination of virtual and real experimental methods provides high support for students' learning outcomes and promotes the strengthening of physics concepts. The improvement of student learning outcomes due to the combination of virtual and real laboratory experimental methods bridges the gap between concepts and theories. The use of virtual laboratories facilitates students in observing microscopic phenomena and turning abstract concepts into concrete ones. The experimental method of combining virtual and real laboratories can be an effective solution to improve students learning outcomes. Further research can be carried out by expanding the research sample, learning materials and experimental methods involving the control class.

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## Declaration of Conflict

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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