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The Effect of the Use of Canva Interactive Media on the Critical Thinking Ability of Science Learning Students in Class VI of SD Inpres 1 Tondo

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A B S T R A C T

Critical thinking is an essential competency that should be developed in elementary education to support students in solving problems and making informed decisions. However, students' critical thinking skills in Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) remain relatively low due to the limited use of interactive digital learning media. This study aimed to examine the effect of Canva-based interactive learning media on the critical thinking skills of sixth-grade students at SD Inpres 1 Tondo. A quantitative approach with a pre-experimental method employing a One Group Pretest–Posttest Design was used. The participants consisted of 14 sixth-grade students selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a multiple-choice critical thinking test and analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Paired Sample t-test with SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that the mean score increased from 61.79 on the pretest to 71.79 on the posttest, representing an improvement of 10.00 points. The Paired Sample t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores ($p < 0.001$). These findings demonstrate that Canva-based interactive learning media effectively enhance students' critical thinking skills and can serve as an innovative digital learning medium to support more engaging and meaningful IPAS instruction in elementary schools.

1. Introduction

Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) learning in elementary school encourages students not only to understand concepts theoretically, but also to be able to develop critical thinking skills. Social studies learning is designed to integrate scientific and social knowledge so that students are able to relate concepts to various phenomena encountered in daily life (Istiqamah & Ziaulhaq, 2025). In fact, most students still experience obstacles in applying the concept of IPAS in their daily lives. This obstacle has an impact on the lack of student participation in learning, so that the

learning outcomes of IPAS have not been maximized (Puspitasari, 2025). In the context of the 21st century, education emphasizes the importance of students to have critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and communication skills. These four competencies are known as 4C skills which are the foundation of modern learning (Fitriah et al., 2026; Oktaria & Susanti, 2025). Critical thinking is one of the fundamental abilities because it provides opportunities for students to study, evaluate, and find solutions to various problems logically and systematically (Rumanti & Christy, 2026). However, various studies show that the critical thinking skills of Indonesian students are still relatively low, especially at the elementary school level (Istiqamah & Ziaulhaq, 2025; Shoumi & Jf, 2025). This condition is influenced by the dominance of conventional learning methods that are still teacher-centered, so that students do not have the opportunity to explore ideas, conduct investigations, and develop independent thinking skills (Rumanti & Christy, 2026).

More specifically, in the learning of Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) in elementary school, students often experience difficulties in connecting abstract concepts with the phenomena of daily life. As a result, social studies learning is often perceived as limited to memorization, not as a means to cultivate higher-level thinking skills (Pramesti & Sukma, 2026). In fact, the characteristics of IPAS in the independent curriculum emphasize contextual learning that encourages students to observe, analyze, and solve problems in the surrounding environment (Nisa et al., 2025). In elementary school learning, ideally, students are not only required to master knowledge by rote but also be able to develop critical thinking skills as one of the important competencies of the 21st century. For this reason, the learning process should be supported by innovative, interactive, and contextual media so that students can understand the material more deeply (Alfatih et al., 2024; Yuliana et al., 2023). Interesting learning media has also been proven to be able to increase student attention, engagement, and learning retention (Hidayat et al., 2025; Imam Taufiq et al., 2025).

The ideal learning medium is not just a visual aid, but is able to facilitate students' active participation, increase learning motivation, and provide a meaningful learning experience (Febriana et al., 2024; Putra & Filianti, 2022). Digital applications such as Canva are an alternative because they offer a variety of attractive and easy-to-use design features that help teachers present material creatively and are easier for students to understand (Arianto, 2023; Hendratno et al., 2025). Previous research has shown the effectiveness of using Canva in learning. The use of the Canva application in elementary school learning can increase students' interest in learning while making it easier for teachers to design engaging learning media (Suteja et al., 2024). Furthermore, the development of Canva-based comic media for fourth-grade elementary science learning was found to be valid, highly practical, and effective in improving students' learning outcomes (Imam Taufiq et al., 2025; Pramesti & Sukma, 2026). Furthermore, the implementation of a Canva-based training module has been demonstrated to enhance elementary school teachers' ICT competence, leading to improvements in the quality of learning media used in the teaching and learning process (Nisa et al., 2025). These findings are further supported by previous studies demonstrating that

Canva can improve students' learning motivation, learning outcomes, and critical thinking skills (Febriana et al., 2024; Sugiono et al., 2026).

Thus, the ideal conditions in this study illustrate the realization of an innovative learning process through the use of the Canva application as a learning medium that supports active student engagement. The use of Canva is expected to facilitate a deeper understanding of concepts through attractive and interactive visual presentations. In addition, the application of this media also plays a role in optimizing the development of students' critical thinking skills so that the learning process becomes more meaningful and in accordance with the demands of 21st century learning (Arianto, 2023; Hidayatullah et al., 2023). Based on the results of initial observations and interviews that the researcher has conducted at SD Inpres 1 Tondo, it was found that most students still have difficulties in understanding the content of the learning material. This condition is caused by the limited learning media available so that the development of students' critical thinking skills is not optimal. Considering these conditions, the researcher intends to use the Canva application as an alternative learning media considering that this application has various advantages that can support the improvement of students' critical thinking skills. These field findings show that there is a gap between ideal conditions for student-centered learning and learning practices that are still dominated by conventional methods (Alfatih et al., 2024).

This condition shows that there is a gap between the ideal of learning that is supposed to foster critical thinking skills and the reality that still emphasizes low level cognitive aspects. To bridge this gap, learning media innovations are needed that not only attract students' attention but are also able to facilitate active involvement in the learning process. One of the relevant media is Canva, an interactive graphic design platform that can be used to create attractive presentations, infographics, and digital worksheets. Through contextual and interactive visualization features, Canva is believed to be able to increase learning motivation while stimulating students' critical thinking skills (Effendi et al., 2024; Istiqamah & Ziaulhaq, 2025). Canva's effectiveness as a learning medium has also been proven by several previous studies. The use of Canva has been reported to improve the motivation and learning outcomes of elementary school students (Putra & Filianti, 2022). The integration of Canva into science learning has also been found to improve students' critical thinking skills (Nisa et al., 2025; Yuliana et al., 2023). In addition, digital-based interactive media create a more collaborative and meaningful learning environment that supports deeper student engagement. Furthermore, Canva has been shown to effectively support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, particularly in fostering the development of 21st-century skills (Arianto, 2023).

Based on this description, it can be concluded that the low critical thinking ability of students in social studies learning at SD Inpres 1 Tondo needs to be overcome through learning media innovation. The use of Canva's interactive media is seen as one of the relevant alternatives to improve the quality of learning while supporting the development of students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the influence of the use of Canva interactive media on

students' critical thinking skills in social studies learning in grade VI of SD Inpres 1 Tondo.

2. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative method with a pre-experimental design design type one group pretest-posttest design. This design was used to determine the effect of Canva's use of interactive media on students' critical thinking skills in social studies learning. In this design, there is only one research group that is given the treatment in the form of the use of Canva interactive media (Sugiyono, 2019). Before the treatment is given, students first take a pretest to find out their initial critical thinking skills. Furthermore, students participated in IPAS learning using Canva interactive media for several meetings. After the treatment is completed, students take a posttest to find out their critical thinking skills after learning using Canva media. The difference in pretest and posttest scores was used to determine the influence of Canva's interactive media use on students' critical thinking skills. The design of the research is stated in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Experimental Research Design of The Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design

Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
O_1	X	O_2

The study was conducted with 14 sixth-grade students at SD Inpres 1 Tondo to investigate the effect of Canva-based interactive learning media on students' critical thinking skills in Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS), particularly on the solar system topic. The experimental procedure began with administering a pretest to determine students' initial critical thinking skills. Subsequently, the researcher implemented Canva-based interactive learning media during 2 instructional meetings, with each meeting lasting 70 minutes (2 × 35 minutes). The learning focused on the solar system topic in the sixth-grade IPAS curriculum.

Population is the whole subject of research that has certain characteristics according to the purpose of the research. The population refers to the entire group of objects or subjects that possess specific characteristics and qualities determined by the researcher for investigation and from which research conclusions are drawn (Alfatih et al., 2024; Yuliana et al., 2023). The population of this study consists of all 23 sixth-grade students at SD Inpres 1 Tondo during the 2025/2026 academic year, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Data on the Gender and Number of Students

Gender	Quantity
Male	13 people
Women	10 people

The sample is a subset of the population selected to represent the characteristics of the target population and serve as the source of research data. Accurate sample

selection is essential because it influences the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the research findings (Febriana et al., 2024). Based on the total population of only 23 sixth-grade students, all population members were included as research participants using a saturated sampling technique (total sampling). This technique is applied when the entire population is used as the sample, enabling researchers to obtain data that accurately represent the characteristics of the population under study (Suteja et al., 2024).

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from grade VI students of SD Inpres 1 Tondo as the subject of the research through the results of the critical thinking ability test given before and after learning using Canva media (pretest and posttest), as well as through the results of observation of student involvement during the learning process. Secondary data is obtained from school documents, such as student lists, report card scores, as well as various literature and previous research results relevant to social studies learning, Canva media, and critical thinking skills. These two data sources are used in a complementary manner to support the accuracy of the analysis and the drawing of research conclusions.

Data collection is a crucial stage in the research process because it determines the quality and accuracy of the information obtained. Data collection techniques refer to the procedures used by researchers to obtain the data required to address the research objectives and may include observation, interviews, documentation, and tests (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the data collection techniques were adapted to the quantitative experimental research design. Therefore, the primary instruments used to collect data were tests, questionnaires, observations, and documentation.

The primary instrument used in this study was a 20 item multiple choice test designed to measure students' critical thinking skills before and after the implementation of the treatment (pretest and posttest). The test was developed based on critical thinking indicators, namely interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, and explanation (Putra & Filianti, 2022; Yuliana et al., 2023). Multiple-choice tests are considered an appropriate instrument for assessing students' abilities, skills, and learning achievement in a measurable and objective manner (Putra & Filianti, 2022). Prior to data collection, the instrument was reviewed by experts in elementary education to establish its content validity. Revisions were made based on the experts' feedback to improve the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the test items. Furthermore, the reliability of the instrument was examined using [Cronbach's Alpha/KR-20], and the results indicated that the instrument met the required reliability criteria and was appropriate for data collection (Putra & Filianti, 2022). The primary instrument used in this study was a 20-item multiple-choice test designed to measure students' critical thinking skills before and after the implementation of the treatment (pretest and posttest). The test was developed based on five critical thinking indicators: interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, and explanation.

Multiple-choice tests are considered an appropriate instrument for assessing students' abilities, skills, and learning achievement in a measurable and objective

manner (Sugiyono, 2019). Prior to data collection, the instrument was reviewed by experts in elementary education to establish its content validity. Revisions were made based on the experts' feedback to improve the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the test items. Furthermore, the reliability of the instrument was examined using [Cronbach's Alpha/KR-20], and the results indicated that the instrument met the required reliability criteria and was appropriate for data collection (Anggraini & Erviana, 2023).

Inferential analysis was conducted to find out if there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of students' critical thinking skills after the use of Canva's interactive media. Before hypothesis testing is carried out, the data is first tested for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test. If the data is distributed normally, then a Paired Sample t-Test is used. However, if the data is not distributed normally, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test is used. This analysis aims to determine the influence of the use of Canva interactive media on students' critical thinking skills in science learning.

The hypothesis of this study aims to determine the influence of the use of Canva interactive media on students' critical thinking skills in social studies learning. H_0: There was no significant effect of the use of Canva interactive media on the critical thinking skills of grade VI students of SD Inpres 1 Tondo in learning science. H_1: There is a significant influence of the use of Canva interactive media on the critical thinking skills of grade VI students of SD Inpres 1 Tondo in learning social studies. Hypothesis testing was carried out using the Paired Sample t-Test at a significance level of 0.05. If the value of Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05 then H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Conversely, if the value of Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05 then H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected.

Before hypothesis testing, the normality of the pretest and posttest scores was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test because the sample consisted of fewer than 50 participants. The Shapiro–Wilk test is recommended for small sample sizes and is commonly used to determine whether the data satisfy the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis. Data were considered normally distributed when the significance value exceeded 0.05, whereas a significance value below 0.05 indicated that the data were not normally distributed (Ariyani et al., 2025). Following the normality test, hypothesis testing was conducted using the Paired Sample *t*-Test with the assistance of SPSS version 30 to examine the effect of Canva-based interactive learning media on the critical thinking skills of sixth-grade students. If the data met the assumption of normality, the Paired Sample *t*-Test was applied. Otherwise, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used as a non-parametric alternative. The decision criterion was based on the significance value (p). If the significance value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, indicating that the implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media had a significant effect on students' critical thinking skills. Conversely, if the significance value exceeded 0.05, H_0 was accepted, indicating that the treatment did not have a statistically significant effect.

3. Results and Discussion

This research was carried out at SD Inpres 1 Tondo, Palu City, Central Sulawesi. The research was conducted on grade VI students with the aim of finding out the influence of the use of Canva interactive media on students' critical thinking skills in learning science of the solar system material. The study used the one group pretest–posttest design, which provides a pretest before treatment and a posttest after learning using Canva's interactive media. The number of respondents who participated in the study was 14 students.

Implementation of Canva-Based Interactive Learning Media

The study was conducted with 14 sixth-grade students at SD Inpres 1 Tondo to investigate the effect of Canva-based interactive learning media on students' critical thinking skills in Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS), particularly on the solar system topic. The experimental procedure began with administering a pretest to determine students' initial critical thinking skills. Subsequently, the researcher implemented Canva-based interactive learning media during 2 instructional meetings, with each meeting lasting 140 minutes. During the treatment, the teacher introduced the learning objectives and presented the learning materials using Canva-based presentations that incorporated images, animations, videos, and infographics related to the solar system. Students were encouraged to observe the visual materials, respond to guiding questions, participate in classroom discussions, and complete learning tasks designed to stimulate critical thinking. Throughout the learning process, the teacher facilitated discussions, provided feedback, and encouraged students to analyze information, evaluate evidence, and draw conclusions. After all instructional meetings were completed, students took the posttest using the same critical thinking instrument administered during the pretest to evaluate changes in their learning outcomes.

Description of Research Results Data

The research data was obtained through a critical thinking ability test in the form of 20 multiple-choice questions given before and after treatment. The results of descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS are presented in the following Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Critical Thinking Scores

Variable	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	14	35	75	61.79	11.87
Posttest	14	35	90	71.79	16.60

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of students' critical thinking scores before and after the implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media. The mean pretest score was 61.79 (SD = 11.87), with scores ranging from 35 to 75. Following the treatment, the mean posttest score increased to 71.79 (SD = 16.60), with scores ranging from 35 to 90. The increase of 10.00 points in the mean score indicates an improvement in students' critical thinking skills after participating in learning activities supported by Canva-based interactive learning media.

Normality Test

Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality of the pretest and posttest scores was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test because the sample consisted of fewer than 50 participants. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test Results

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig.	Interpretation
Pretest	0.951	14	0.572	Normal
Posttest	0.964	14	0.785	Normal

The Shapiro–Wilk test indicated that the pretest scores were normally distributed ($W = 0.951$, $p = 0.572$), as were the posttest scores ($W = 0.964$, $p = 0.785$). Since the significance values for both variables exceeded 0.05, the assumption of normality was satisfied. Therefore, the Paired Sample *t*-test was appropriate for testing the research hypothesis.

Paired Sample t-Test Test Results

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the Paired Sample t-Test to find out if there were differences in students' critical thinking skills before and after the use of Canva's interactive media are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Paired Sample T-Test Results

Comparison	Mean Difference	SD	SE	95% CI	*t*	*df*	*p*
Pretest – Posttest	-10.00	7.85	2.10	[-14.53, -5.47]	-4.77	13	< 0.001

Table 5 presents the results of the Paired Sample *t*-test comparing students' critical thinking scores before and after the implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores ($t(13) = -4.77$, $p < 0.001$). The mean difference was -10.00 (95% CI [-14.53, -5.47]), indicating that students' posttest scores were significantly higher than their pretest scores. These findings demonstrate that the implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media significantly improved students' critical thinking skills in IPAS learning.

The Paired Sample *t*-test produced a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. These findings demonstrate that the implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media significantly improved students' critical thinking skills in IPAS learning.

Effect Size Analysis

To determine the magnitude of the treatment effect, Cohen's *d* was calculated as a measure of effect size. The analysis yielded a Cohen's *d* value of 1.12, indicating a large effect according to Cohen's criteria. This finding demonstrates that the

implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media produced a substantial improvement in students' critical thinking skills, suggesting that the observed gains were not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media significantly improved students' critical thinking skills in IPAS learning. The mean score increased by 10.00 points, from 61.79 on the pretest to 71.79 on the posttest, and the Paired Sample *t*-test confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant. These findings suggest that integrating visual and interactive learning resources into classroom instruction can effectively facilitate students' understanding of abstract concepts while encouraging higher-order thinking skills.

The improvement in students' critical thinking skills can be explained by the characteristics of Canva-based learning media. During the instructional process, students were exposed to visual representations of the solar system through images, animations, videos, and infographics, enabling them to observe phenomena, analyze information, answer guiding questions, and participate actively in classroom discussions. These activities encouraged students to interpret information, evaluate evidence, and formulate conclusions, which are essential components of critical thinking.

The present findings support the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which suggests that combining verbal explanations with visual representations facilitates meaningful learning by reducing cognitive load and promoting deeper conceptual understanding. The integration of multimedia elements in Canva enabled students to connect abstract scientific concepts with concrete visual experiences, thereby improving their ability to analyze information and solve problems (Nisa et al., 2025; Yuliana et al., 2023).

The results of this study are consistent with previous research demonstrating the positive effects of Canva on students' learning outcomes and critical thinking skills. Previous studies have shown that Canva enhances students' engagement and motivation through visually appealing learning materials, improves elementary students' critical thinking skills, and supports science learning by increasing students' participation and conceptual understanding (Fitriah et al., 2026; Hidayat et al., 2025). Although these studies were conducted in different educational settings and subject areas, they consistently demonstrate that Canva promotes active learning through interactive multimedia features. Similar to the present study, these findings suggest that integrating visual, interactive, and technology-based learning media can create meaningful learning experiences that foster students' higher-order thinking skills.

However, the present study differs from previous research because it specifically investigated sixth-grade students learning the Solar System topic in IPAS using a one group pretest–posttest design. The observed improvement suggests that Canva

is effective not only as a presentation tool but also as a medium that supports inquiry, classroom interaction, and students' critical thinking development through meaningful visualization and collaborative learning activities.

Study Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the study involved only 14 sixth-grade students from a single elementary school, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study employed a one group pretest–posttest design without a control group, making it difficult to attribute the observed improvement exclusively to the Canva-based interactive learning media. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples and employ stronger experimental designs, such as quasi-experimental or true experimental designs with control groups, to provide more robust evidence regarding the effectiveness of Canva-based interactive learning media.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Canva-based interactive learning media significantly improved the critical thinking skills of sixth-grade students in IPAS learning at SD Inpres 1 Tondo. The significant increase in students' posttest scores demonstrates that Canva provides an engaging learning environment through visual and interactive content that supports students' higher-order thinking skills. Practically, these findings suggest that elementary school teachers can integrate Canva into IPAS learning to present abstract concepts through interactive presentations, animations, videos, and infographics that encourage students to participate actively, analyze information, and solve problems. In addition, Canva can also be adapted for other subjects that require the development of critical thinking skills, making it a flexible digital learning medium for classroom instruction. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, employ quasi-experimental or true experimental designs with control groups, and investigate the effectiveness of Canva-based learning media across different learning topics, subjects, and educational levels. Such studies are expected to provide stronger evidence and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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