



Enhancing Student Participation and Confidence Through the Implementation of the Case-Based Method

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Informasi Artikel

Submitted: 28-05-2026

Accepted: 18-07-2026

Published: 10-10-2026

Keywords:

Case-Based Learning

Classroom Action Research

Student Participation

Student Confidence

Active Learning

Abstract

This study aims to enhance first-semester students' participation and confidence in the Introduction to Business course by implementing the Case-Based Method (CBM). The study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The participants consisted of 35 first-semester students from the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Buana Perjuangan Karawang. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and field notes. The findings indicate that the implementation of the Case-Based Method improved students' participation and confidence. Students' participation increased from 71% in Cycle I to 89% in Cycle II. Additionally, students showed increased confidence in asking questions and expressing their opinions during classroom discussions. Case-based learning created a more interactive, collaborative, and student-centered learning environment. Therefore, the Case-Based Method can be considered an effective instructional strategy for enhancing students' active participation and self-confidence in the Introduction to Business learning process in higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a crucial role in developing qualified, adaptive, and competitive human resources in the era of globalization. The learning process in higher education institutions should not merely focus on the acquisition of academic knowledge but also on the development of critical thinking, communication skills, collaboration, and self-confidence. These competencies are essential for supporting students' academic achievement and preparing them to face increasingly complex professional challenges [1].

Active participation is one of the important indicators of successful learning in higher education. Students are expected to actively engage in discussions, ask questions, express opinions, and collaborate with their peers throughout the learning process [2][3]. However, active participation and self-confidence remain challenges, particularly among first-semester students transitioning from secondary to higher education. Unlike the learning environment in schools, higher education emphasizes independent learning, critical inquiry, discussion, and active student involvement in constructing knowledge. Consequently, many first-semester students experience difficulties adapting to this new academic culture and tend to become passive participants during classroom activities [4].

This condition was also observed in the Introduction to Business course of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang. Preliminary classroom observations revealed that most students demonstrated low levels of participation during learning activities.

Students tended to remain passive during discussions, lacked confidence in asking questions, and were reluctant to express their opinions [5][6]. Many students hesitated to participate actively because they feared giving incorrect answers or receiving negative responses from their peers. In addition, students' presentation skills were not yet optimal, and classroom interactions were still dominated by the lecturer's explanations. As a result, opportunities for students to develop communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and self-confidence were limited [7].

Low levels of participation and confidence may negatively affect the effectiveness of the learning process. Students who are reluctant to participate actively often have fewer opportunities to exchange ideas, develop communication skills, and construct a deeper understanding through interaction with peers and lecturers. Therefore, learning strategies that encourage active engagement and confidence are needed to create a more effective and meaningful learning environment [8].

Case-based learning offers a more meaningful learning experience because students are actively engaged in analyzing and solving real-world problems, thereby enhancing their critical thinking skills [9], [10][11]. One instructional approach that can be used to increase students' active participation is the Case-Based Method (CBM). This method is a case-based learning approach that places students at the center of the learning process (student-centered learning) [12]. Through this approach, students are encouraged to analyze and discuss real-life cases, thereby improving their critical thinking, communication, and collaborative skills [13].

Furthermore, discussion and presentation activities within case-based learning can help improve students' confidence in expressing their opinions. By engaging students in collaborative problem-solving activities, the Case-Based Method provides opportunities for students to communicate ideas, defend arguments, and interact more actively with their peers. As a result, students are expected not only to improve their cognitive abilities but also to develop the confidence needed to participate effectively in academic discussions [14].

Previous studies have shown that the implementation of the Case-Based Method can improve learning activities, communication skills, student engagement, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities in the learning process [12], [14], [15]. However, previous studies have predominantly emphasized cognitive learning outcomes and analytical competencies, particularly in the context of developing students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities [16]. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the implementation of the Case-Based Method among first-semester students who are still adapting to higher education learning environments and developing confidence in participating actively in classroom discussions and collaborative learning activities.

This condition indicates a research gap in the existing literature. Although the effectiveness of the Case-Based Method in improving critical thinking, communication skills, and learning outcomes has been widely investigated [17], limited attention has been given to its implementation among first-semester students who are still adapting to higher education learning environments. Furthermore, few studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of the Case-Based Method in simultaneously enhancing students' participation and self-confidence, particularly during the early stages of university education when students are still developing fundamental soft skills required for active learning [10].

The novelty of this study lies in the implementation of the Case-Based Method to simultaneously improve active participation and self-confidence among first-semester Management students in the Introduction to Business course. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focused on learning achievement, critical thinking, communication, or problem-solving skills among higher-level students, this study specifically investigates the role of the Case-Based Method in developing foundational soft skills among students who are still adapting to the learning culture of higher education. Furthermore, this study employs a classroom action research approach to examine how the Case-Based Method can create a more participatory learning environment that encourages students to actively engage in discussions, presentations, and opinion-sharing activities.

Based on these issues, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Case-Based Method in improving students' participation and confidence in the Introduction to Business course.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach aimed at improving students' participation and confidence through the implementation of the Case-Based Method (CBM) in the Introduction to Business course. The study was conducted in the Management Study Program, Faculty of

Economics and Business, Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang. The participants consisted of 35 first-semester students enrolled in the Introduction to Business course.

The CAR design followed the action research cycle described by Mertler, consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection [18]. The research was conducted in two cycles, in which each cycle was designed based on the results of reflection from the previous cycle. The main focus of the intervention was the integration of the Case-Based Method into the existing Semester Learning Plan (RPS) of the Introduction to Business course.

The implementation of CBM was integrated into the learning activities by adjusting the learning outcomes, learning materials, and assessment strategies outlined in the RPS. In each learning meeting, students were provided with contextual business cases related to the topics discussed, such as business environment, entrepreneurship, organizational management, and decision-making in business situations. The learning process consisted of case orientation, group discussion, case analysis, presentation of solutions, and reflection activities. Through these activities, students were encouraged to analyze problems, exchange ideas, communicate arguments, and develop confidence in expressing their opinions [10][12].

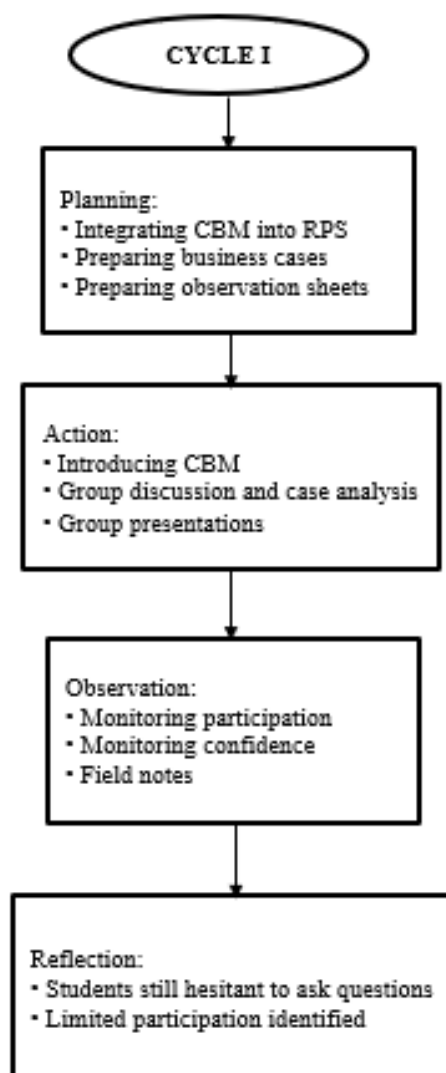


Figure 1. Cycle I Operational Design of Classroom Action Research Using the Case-Based Method

In Cycle I, the implementation focused on introducing students to the Case-Based Method and building their ability to analyze business cases through group discussions. Students were guided to identify problems, analyze their causes, and propose solutions based on relevant business concepts. However, based on the reflection results, several students still showed hesitation in asking questions, expressing opinions, and actively participating during discussions.

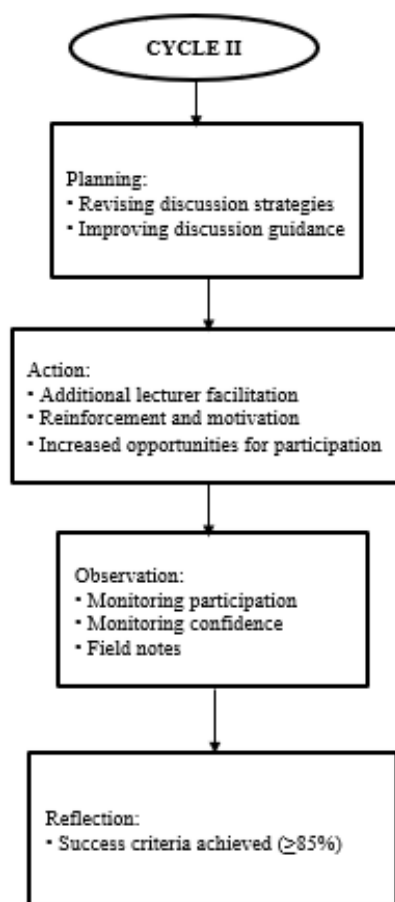


Figure 2. Cycle II Operational Design of Classroom Action Research Using the Case-Based Method

Therefore, improvements were implemented in Cycle II by providing clearer discussion guidelines, additional lecturer facilitation, greater opportunities for individual participation, and reinforcement to encourage students to express their ideas confidently. Students were also encouraged to respond to other groups' presentations and actively engage in classroom discussions. These improvements were intended to strengthen students' participation and confidence during the learning process.

The research was considered successful when the achievement of students' participation and confidence indicators reached a minimum of 85% classically. The action was terminated once the predetermined success criteria had been achieved, indicating that the implementation of the Case-Based Method effectively improved students' participation and confidence.

Data were collected through observation, documentation, and field notes. The observation instrument was developed based on theoretical indicators of student participation and self-confidence derived from relevant literature. Student participation indicators included: (1) involvement in group discussions, (2) willingness to ask questions, (3) ability to provide opinions or responses, and (4) active involvement in solving case problems. Meanwhile, self-confidence indicators included: (1) confidence in delivering presentations, (2) willingness to express ideas in front of the class, (3) ability to respond to questions or feedback, and (4) readiness to participate in academic discussions [19], [20].

To ensure that the observation instrument was appropriate for the objectives of this study, each indicator was formulated to align with the characteristics of Case-Based Method implementation and the intended learning outcomes of the Introduction to Business course. The indicators were adapted from relevant literature on student participation and self-confidence to capture changes occurring during the intervention process [19], [20].

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis by calculating the percentage achievement of each indicator in every cycle [21]. Improvements in students' participation and confidence were determined by comparing the results obtained in Cycle I and Cycle II.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Initial Learning Conditions

Based on initial observations, most students demonstrated low participation during classroom activities. Students tended to be passive, lacked confidence in expressing opinions, and were reluctant to ask questions. The learning process was still dominated by lecturer-centered instruction, resulting in minimal student interaction and collaboration.

These conditions indicate that students were not yet actively engaged in the learning process and required a more interactive instructional approach to improve participation and confidence.

Table 1. Initial Conditions of Students' Participation and Confidence

Indicators	Initial Condition
Student Participation	Low
Confidence in Asking Questions	Low
Participation in Discussions	Less Active
Group Presentation Skills	Not Optimal
Ability to Express Opinions	Low

Based on Table 1, all indicators were categorized as low, indicating the need for an instructional strategy that promotes active learning and student engagement.

3.1.2 Implementation of Case-Based Learning (Cycle I and Cycle II)

In Cycle I, the Case-Based Method was introduced by dividing students into small groups to analyze business-related cases. Students showed initial improvement in participation; however, hesitation and lack of confidence were still evident, particularly during class discussions and question-and-answer sessions.

The implementation of Cycle II incorporated improvements based on reflection from Cycle I. The lecturer provided clearer procedural guidance, stronger scaffolding during discussions, and more structured opportunities for students to present and respond to peer ideas. As a result, students became more actively involved, more expressive, and more confident in classroom interaction.

To avoid redundancy, the detailed quantitative comparison of Cycle I and Cycle II is summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Comparison of Students' Participation and Confidence in Cycle I and Cycle II

Indicators	Cycle I	Cycle II	Improvement
Student Participation	71%	89%	18%
Confidence in Asking Questions	68%	87%	19%
Participation in Discussions	74%	91%	17%
Group Presentation Skills	72%	90%	18%
Ability to Express Opinions	70%	88%	18%

Based on Table 2, all indicators showed improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II. The most notable increase occurred in students' confidence in asking questions (19%), indicating a positive development in classroom engagement and communication behavior.

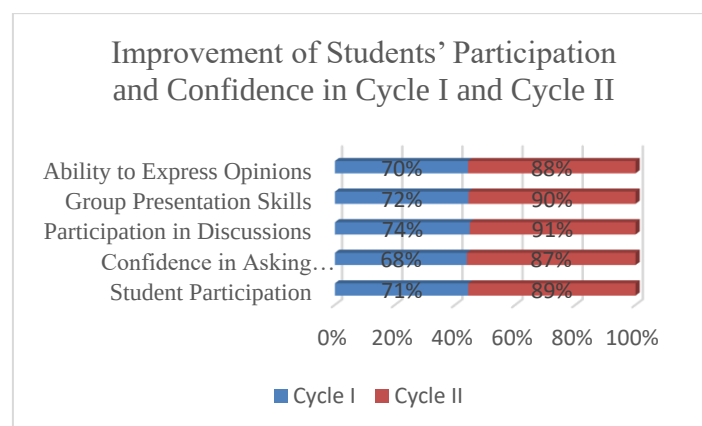


Figure 3. Improvement of Students' Participation and Confidence in Cycle I and Cycle II

Figure 3 further illustrates the overall improvement trends across both cycles, showing consistent enhancement in all measured indicators.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Case-Based Method effectively enhances student participation and confidence in learning activities. However, the improvement is not merely a result of instructional design changes, but also reflects deeper psychological and pedagogical processes occurring within students.

From a psychological perspective, the increase in students' confidence can be explained through Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. Students in Cycle I initially exhibited low self-efficacy, characterized by hesitation, fear of making mistakes, and limited willingness to speak in public. Through repeated exposure to structured group discussions and guided case analysis in Cycle II, students experienced mastery experiences and social persuasion, which are key sources of self-efficacy development. This gradually strengthened their belief in their ability to participate effectively in academic discussions.

In addition, the Case-Based Method aligns with the Active Learning Framework, where students are positioned as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients. The requirement to analyze real-world business cases encouraged students to engage in higher-order thinking processes such as analysis, evaluation, and problem-solving. This active cognitive engagement contributed to increased participation and improved communication behavior.

The improvement observed between Cycle I and Cycle II can also be attributed to the quality of instructional scaffolding. In Cycle II, clearer guidance and more structured discussion formats reduced cognitive load and classroom anxiety, particularly among first-semester students who are still adapting to the transition from passive learning habits in secondary education to independent learning in higher education contexts [22].

First-year students often experience uncertainty in expressing opinions due to limited academic exposure and fear of negative evaluation. The gradual shift from lecturer-centered to student-centered learning created a psychologically safer learning environment, which supported the development of confidence and communication willingness.

Furthermore, collaborative learning within case-based activities facilitated peer interaction, which plays a crucial role in developing communication competence and social confidence. Through group discussion and presentation activities, students learned to articulate ideas, negotiate meaning, and respond to differing perspectives.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that highlight the effectiveness of Case-Based Learning in improving student engagement and collaborative skills [12], [14]. However, beyond behavioral improvement, this study emphasizes that such instructional strategies also contribute to the development of cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, particularly self-confidence and academic self-efficacy.

Overall, the Case-Based Method not only improves participation levels but also fosters a learning environment that supports cognitive engagement, communication skills, and psychological readiness for active learning in higher education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Case-Based Method effectively enhances first-semester students' participation and confidence in the Introduction to Business course. The improvement is reflected in students' more active engagement during learning activities, increased willingness to contribute ideas, better communication during discussions, and improved performance in group presentations.

The findings indicate that Case-Based Learning creates a more interactive and student-centered learning environment that encourages students to actively construct knowledge through discussion, collaboration, and problem-solving activities. Furthermore, this learning approach supports the development of students' communication skills and self-confidence, particularly in expressing opinions and participating in academic discussions. Overall, the Case-Based Method is an effective instructional approach for fostering active learning, improving classroom interaction, and supporting the development of essential soft skills in higher education.

This study was conducted within a classroom action research design involving a limited number of participants in a single course context, which means the findings primarily reflect short-term improvements in student engagement and confidence within the implemented cycles. In addition, the absence of a control group limits the ability to compare the effectiveness of the Case-Based Method with other instructional approaches in a more rigorous experimental setting.

Future research is recommended to adopt quasi-experimental or experimental designs involving control and experimental groups to obtain more robust evidence of the effectiveness of the Case-Based Method. Further studies may also examine the long-term impact of this approach on students' learning retention, critical thinking skills, and communication competence across different disciplines and educational levels.

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