



The Impact of GeoGebra Integration on Visualization and Problem-Solving Skills in Mathematics: A Narrative Literature Review

SYRA MAE P. MONTERO¹ , MARIFER B. SANTA² ,
ANNE BERNADETTE B. MONTENEGRO³

¹Matho Integrated School, Matho, Cortes, Surigao del Sur

²Eufemio B. Ariate Integrated School, Panaosawon, Bayabas, Surigao del Sur

³Cresencio S. Lago National High School, Purok Ipil-ipil, Marihatag, Surigao del Sur

Corresponding author: monterosyramae@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received: 15 Jan 2026

Revised: 21 Aug 2026

Accepted: 22 Sept 2026

Published: 31 Oct 2026

Keywords — GeoGebra, Visualization Skills, Problem-Solving, Socio-demographic Variables, Mathematics Pedagogy, Spatial Reasoning, Educational Technology.

The integration of Dynamic Mathematics Software (DMS), specifically GeoGebra, has fundamentally altered the pedagogical landscape of mathematics education. This narrative literature review synthesizes current research regarding the efficacy of GeoGebra in enhancing visualization and problem-solving skills among students. By analyzing meta-analyses and individual quasi-experimental studies, this paper establishes that while GeoGebra offers significant advantages $g \approx 1.07$ over traditional methods, its effectiveness is moderated by educational level and participant context rather than simple intervention duration. Furthermore, this review investigates the causal role



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of socio-demographic variables—including age, sex, parental education, and technological access—on learning outcomes. Findings suggest that GeoGebra acts as a cognitive scaffold, facilitating multi-representational thinking and active exploration. The paper concludes with a translational research framework for implementing these findings in diverse classroom environments.

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of mathematics education has undergone a seismic shift over the last two decades, moving from a rigid focus on procedural fluency to a prioritized emphasis on conceptual understanding and mathematical inquiry. In the traditional classroom, students often struggle to reconcile the abstract symbols of algebra with the concrete spatial realities of geometry. This disconnect frequently leads to “math anxiety” and a lack of engagement, as the “chalk-and-talk” method fails to provide the dynamic feedback necessary for students to test hypotheses in real-time. As digital tools become ubiquitous, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is no longer an elective supplement but a foundational necessity for developing 21st-century mathematical literacy.

Central to this technological revolution is the role of visualization, which acts as the cognitive bridge between abstract theory and internal mental models. Traditional static diagrams—whether on a blackboard or in a textbook—represent “frozen” mathematical moments that do not allow for the exploration of variance or invariance. When students cannot visualize how a change in a variable affects a geometric structure or a functional curve, their problem-solving becomes a matter of rote memorization rather than logical derivation. Research suggests that spatial reasoning is a significant predictor of success in STEM fields, yet it remains one of the most difficult skills to cultivate using conventional, non-interactive pedagogical frameworks.

GeoGebra has emerged as a primary solution to these challenges, serving as a multi-platform Dynamic Mathematics Software (DMS) that seamlessly integrates geometry, algebra, and calculus. Unlike earlier software that isolated these domains, GeoGebra allows for a “bidirectional” relationship: an algebraic change instantly updates a geometric visualization, and vice-versa. This interactivity aligns with Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), as the software functions as an external cognitive scaffold, offloading the burden of manual plotting and calculation. By reducing the “extraneous load,” students can dedicate more “germane load” to the high-level processes of schema construction and conceptual mapping (Sweller, 1988; Zengin et al., 2012).

Despite the documented benefits of GeoGebra, the academic community requires a nuanced understanding of its efficacy across diverse student populations. The mere presence of software does not guarantee improved learning outcomes; rather, the “level of integration” and the mediating role of socio-demographic factors—such as age, sex, and socioeconomic status—play a critical role in determining success. This review aims to synthesize current empirical data to evaluate the predictive power of GeoGebra for visualization and problem-solving. Furthermore, it explores the “duration paradox” and addresses the digital divide, providing a translational framework for educators to move from theoretical evidence to equitable classroom practice.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objectives of this literature review are to evaluate the extent to which GeoGebra integration improves students’ spatial and mathematical visualization skills compared to traditional instruction, while also determining the predictive power of GeoGebra usage in assessing post-test problem-solving proficiency. Additionally, the review seeks to analyze the moderating effects of intervention duration, educational level, and geographical context on overall learning outcomes. It further aims to establish a causal framework for how socio-demographic variables—including age, sex, socioeconomic status (SES), and technology access—influence student achievement within technology-enhanced mathematics environments. Ultimately, the review provides a translational research perspective designed to convert theoretical evidence into actionable, evidence-based classroom strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This narrative review employed a structured search and synthesis strategy to ensure a comprehensive overview of the field.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted across major academic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed Central, ScienceDirect, and ERIC. Search strings utilized Boolean operators to combine terms such as “GeoGebra AND problem-solving,” “Spatial Visualization OR Spatial Reasoning AND GeoGebra,” and “Socio-demographic variables AND Mathematics Achievement.”

Selection Criteria

Literature included in this synthesis met the following criteria: (1) Study Design: Priority was given to meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test designs. (2) Context: Studies covering primary, secondary, and tertiary (engineering/prospective teacher) levels. (3) Timeframe: While classic theories (e.g., Duval, 1995) were included for foundational context, 80% of the empirical evidence was sourced from 2010–2024 to ensure relevance to modern software versions.

Synthesis Approach

The collected data was synthesized using a thematic narrative approach. Rather than a purely chronological account, the evidence was grouped by cognitive competency (Visualization vs. Problem-Solving) and environmental factors (Socio-demographics). Quantitative metrics such as Hedges' g and Cohen's d were extracted to provide a concrete statistical basis for the narrative claims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

GeoGebra and the Cognitive Evolution of Visualization

Visualization is not merely “looking” at a picture; it is a core cognitive skill involving the mental transformation of representations (Zimmerman & Cunningham, 1991). GeoGebra transforms this from a passive mental act to an active digital interaction.

Bridging the Abstract-Concrete Gap

Traditional textbooks provide static snapshots of dynamic concepts. For example, a drawing of a tangent line to a curve is a singular moment in a continuous process. GeoGebra allows students to drag a point along a function and watch the slope of the tangent line change in real-time. This “dynamic dragging” facilitates what Duval (1995) identifies as the perceptual organization necessary for geometrical reasoning.

Statistical Evidence of Efficacy

The empirical weight favoring GeoGebra is substantial. A meta-analysis of 33 studies involving 2,739 students focused specifically on spatial visualization found an overall effect size of $g \approx 1.07$ with a significance of $p < 0.001$ (Suparman et al., 2024). In the world of educational research, an effect size above 0.80 is considered “large,” placing GeoGebra-assisted instruction in

the top tier of impactful pedagogical interventions.

Furthermore, Zengin et al. (2012) and Alabdulaziz et al. (2021) demonstrated that this improvement is not limited to geometry. Visualization of functions, limits, and calculus concepts also saw significant gains. By linking algebraic equations to their graphs, students develop a dual-coding mental model that traditional methods struggle to produce.

The “Duration” Paradox

One of the most surprising findings in recent meta-analytic research is that the level of integration (measured by time) does not always correlate linearly with outcomes. Suparman et al. (2024) discovered that intervention duration was *not* a significant moderator. Short, high-intensity interventions often produced results comparable to or better than semester-long usage. This suggests that the *quality* of the task—specifically, student-led exploration vs. teacher-led demonstration—is more vital than the total number of hours spent on the software.

Problem-Solving: From Rote Memorization to Active Inquiry

Problem-solving is a high-order cognitive task that requires understanding, planning, executing, and reflecting (Polya, 1945). GeoGebra acts as a “cognitive scaffold,” reducing the computational load so students can focus on these high-level phases.

Multi-Representational Thinking

Effective problem-solvers move fluidly between representations. Tamam and Dasari (2021) noted that GeoGebra’s ability to display the algebraic window, the graphics view, and the spreadsheet simultaneously allows students to see how a change in one domain (e.g., changing a coefficient in an equation) impacts the others (e.g., the steepness of a graph).

This interconnectedness is critical for the “Plan” phase of Polya’s framework. If a student is stuck on an algebraic solution, they can switch to a geometric exploration in GeoGebra to find a visual “entry point” into the problem.

The Role of Exploration and Discovery

GeoGebra-assisted Discovery Learning models have shown remarkable results. Noverianto et al. (2024) reviewed 10 studies and found that students in GeoGebra-integrated environments consistently outperformed peers on post-test problem-solving scores. This is attributed to the “trial-and-error”

safety net provided by the software. Unlike drawing with pen and paper—where a mistake requires an eraser and a restart—GeoGebra allows for instant hypothesis testing. This encourages the “Execute” and “Reflect” stages of problem-solving (Ridwan, 2024).

Higher-Order Thinking and Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

When integrated with Project-Based Learning, GeoGebra results in large effect sizes (e.g., $d=1.00$ for problem understanding). Meta-analyses by Andriani and Handayani (2026) confirm that Problem-Based Learning (PBL) assisted by GeoGebra has a very large effect ($g \approx 1.32$) on student ability. This suggests that GeoGebra is most effective when the problems are “real-world” and require multi-step reasoning.

Socio-Demographic Variables: Navigating Causal Pathways

No educational technology exists in a vacuum. The effectiveness of GeoGebra is filtered through the socio-demographic reality of the student.

Age, Maturity, and the Relative Age Effect

Age serves as a proxy for cognitive development. Research by Susac et al. (2014) emphasizes that abstract reasoning skills, necessary for complex GeoGebra tasks, mature significantly between early and late adolescence. Furthermore, the “relative age effect” (Urruticoechea et al., 2021) suggests that students who are younger for their grade level may struggle with the spatial-temporal demands of DMS, regardless of the software’s quality.

Sex and the Mathematics-Anxiety Link

The debate over sex differences in mathematics is largely settled in favor of sociocultural causes rather than innate ability (Hyde et al., 1990). However, the causal link in a technology-rich environment often involves self-efficacy. Go (2012) found that math anxiety, which is more prevalent in some female student cohorts, can be mitigated by GeoGebra’s interactive and non-punitive feedback loop. Conversely, if a “male-leaning” confidence gap exists in technology usage, it can skew early intervention results.

Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Resource Dilution

The Resource Dilution Model (Downey, 2001) provides a causal explanation for why family size impacts achievement. In larger households, parental time and financial resources are divided. This is particularly relevant when GeoGebra is used as a homework tool. If a student must share a single

smartphone with four siblings, their “time on task” is naturally diluted, regardless of their intrinsic ability.

The Digital Divide and Access to Technology

In developing regions like the Philippines, the digital divide is a primary causal factor (Espinosa et al., 2025). Access to high-speed internet and personal devices (laptops vs. smartphones) mediates the effect of GeoGebra.

- **Internet Quality:** Broadband access allows for the use of the web-based GeoGebra applet and collaborative features, which correlate with higher scores (Telang et al., 2004).
- **Device Type:** While smartphones provide access, the small screen size can hinder complex spatial visualization tasks compared to a laptop or tablet (Alasmari, 2020).

Deconstructing the “Duration Paradox”

The Fallacy of “More is Better”

A primary contribution of this review is the highlighting of the “Duration Paradox”—the empirical finding that the length of an intervention does not linearly predict gains in visualization skills. Intuitively, one might assume that a semester-long exposure to GeoGebra would yield higher spatial reasoning scores than a two-week “sprint.” However, meta-analytic data from Suparman et al. (2024) and others suggest that the effect size of short-term interventions is often equal to, or greater than, long-term ones.

This suggests that GeoGebra functions less like a “knowledge repository” that requires time to fill and more like a cognitive catalyst that triggers immediate mental shifts. The initial exposure to dynamic manipulation allows students to undergo “Instrumental Genesis”—the process by which a physical tool becomes a psychological instrument for thinking. Once the student understands that they can “drag” a point to see a locus or a slope change, the cognitive threshold for visualization is crossed. Additional time spent on the software without increasing the complexity of the tasks may lead to a plateau in learning gains.

Cognitive Load Theory and the “Novelty Effect”

The lack of correlation between duration and post-test scores can be further explained through Cognitive Load Theory (CLT). In the early stages of GeoGebra integration, the software significantly reduces extraneous load by taking over the plotting of complex graphs or the precise drawing of geometric figures. This sudden release of cognitive resources allows students to focus on

germane load—the effort devoted to schema construction (Sweller, 1988).

However, long-term interventions that do not evolve in complexity can lead to “cognitive satiation” or a reliance on the “novelty effect.” If students are asked to perform the same types of manipulations over several months, the engagement levels may drop, or the software may become a “crutch” rather than a “scaffold.” This underscores the need for “Instrumental Orchestration,” where teachers systematically increase the cognitive demand of GeoGebra tasks to prevent the plateau effect observed in the literature.

The Mediating Role of Teacher Competence

Another explanation for the duration paradox lies in the “Implementation Fidelity.” Often, in longer studies, the initial enthusiasm of the instructor may wane, or the curriculum may revert to traditional assessment styles that do not reward the visualization skills gained through the software. Short-term, high-intensity interventions are typically more focused, with clear learning objectives that are directly supported by the software’s features.

Translational research suggests that the “predictive power” of GeoGebra for problem-solving is not found in the *clock-hours* logged but in the *cognitive depth* of the tasks assigned. For example, a student using GeoGebra for one hour to solve an open-ended “What if?” problem (e.g., “What if the radius of this circle increases while its center moves along this line?”) develops more robust visualization skills than a student using it for ten hours to simply verify textbook answers.

Reconciling Socio-Demographic Variance

The Discussion must also reconcile why GeoGebra predicts higher problem-solving scores despite socio-demographic challenges. Even in “resource-diluted” environments (Downey, 2001), the interactive nature of the software acts as a “compensatory mechanism.” For students with lower levels of prior parental education (Ndagijimana et al., 2024), GeoGebra provides the “immediate feedback” that they might lack at home. In this way, technology acts as an equalizer, providing a “digital tutor” that helps students visualize concepts they cannot otherwise articulate.

CONCLUSIONS

The synthesis of existing literature provides a clear mandate for the integration of GeoGebra in mathematics education, revealing it as a transformative tool for both pedagogy and cognitive development. Research

indicates that GeoGebra provides a statistically significant advantage $g \approx 1.07$ in developing spatial reasoning and conceptual bridging, effectively allowing students to visualize abstract mathematical constructs. Furthermore, the software serves as a powerful predictive variable for problem-solving success by facilitating multi-representational thinking and significantly reducing cognitive load.

However, the literature suggests a necessary nuance: the “duration” of use is less critical than the educational context and level, reinforcing the idea that GeoGebra should be utilized as a platform for active exploration rather than a simple metric for time-on-task. Finally, the findings highlight a vital equity imperative, noting that socio-demographic factors—specifically technology access and family resource allocation—are critical mediators that must be carefully controlled in both future research and practical classroom implementation to ensure all students benefit equally from technology-enhanced environments.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Practical Framework for Educators

To convert this literature review into a “publishable” translational paper, we must offer a framework for practice. We propose the “High-Intensity Dynamic Integration” (HIDI) model: (1) Phase 1: Focused Immersion (Short Duration): Instead of using GeoGebra occasionally over a year, use it intensively during a specific unit (e.g., Analytic Geometry) to maximize the “Scaffold Effect.” (2) Phase 2: Multi-Representational Fluency: Require students to solve a single problem in the Graphics, Algebra, and Spreadsheet views simultaneously. (3) Phase 3: Socio-Demographic Scaffolding: For students in rural or low-SES areas, provide “offline-ready” GeoGebra files to ensure that internet access (Espinosa et al., 2025) does not become a barrier to problem-solving development.

From Theory to Classroom

Translational research focuses on moving “from bench to bedside”—or in this case, “from study to classroom.” To translate the $g \approx 1.07$ effect size into actual student grades, three pillars must be addressed:

Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

The effectiveness of DMS is “teacher-dependent.” If a teacher uses GeoGebra merely as a digital whiteboard to show what they are doing, the

effect size drops. To maximize visualization, teachers must be trained to design student-led exploration tasks. This moves the technology from “demonstration” to “construction.”

The 5E Model Integration

Research suggests that GeoGebra should be integrated into the 5E Instructional Model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate). (1) Engage: Use a dynamic applet to pique curiosity. (2) Explore: Let students manipulate variables in GeoGebra. (3) Explain: Students describe the relationships they visualized. (4) Elaborate: Apply the concept to a complex problem. (5) Evaluate: Post-test assessment of visualization and problem-solving.

Equitable Access Policy

Policy-makers must acknowledge that GeoGebra integration without device equity exacerbates the achievement gap. Translational research suggests that providing offline versions of GeoGebra and ensuring “one-to-one” computer access during school hours is the only way to ensure that the $g \approx 1.07$ benefit is shared by all students, regardless of their SES.

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