



The Use Of Educational Games To Improve Students' Learning Motivation in Elementary School

Deviyanti Abdullah ^{1*}

¹ Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Buton, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Online learning has become the primary solution in addressing educational challenges in the digital era. However, both students and parents continue to face various obstacles. One major issue arises when learning materials are too difficult and delivered using teaching resources that are hard to comprehend. This leads to a decline in students' interest and dedication to learning. Moreover, the inability of parents to fully support their children's learning process during online sessions further complicates the situation. Teaching media used by educators are often monotonous or unappealing, which fails to stimulate students' comprehension effectively. As a result, children struggle to understand complex learning content. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of innovative and engaging learning media in improving students' understanding during online learning. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects include teachers, students, and parents at the elementary school level. Findings from this study are expected to provide recommendations for the development of more adaptive and student-centered digital learning media tailored to the needs and characteristics of learners

Keywords: Education, Students, Educational Games

1. Introduction

Digital education is currently experiencing rapid development, but also faces a number of complex challenges. One of the main challenges is how to increase and maintain student learning motivation amidst the shift in learning patterns from conventional to digital. (Sari, 2020) Learning motivation is a key factor that significantly determines the effectiveness of an educational process. (Widya, 2022) Without strong motivation, students tend to be passive, less involved, and struggle to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Conversely, students with high motivation consistently demonstrate more active engagement in learning activities, have a strong internal drive to understand the material, and tend to produce higher-quality academic performance. (Ratnawati, 2021)

In the context of digital learning, challenges in maintaining motivation can be caused by minimal direct interaction, limited media used, and less conducive learning environments. Therefore, educators are required to design digital learning strategies that are engaging, interactive, and tailored to student characteristics. The use of varied digital media, gamification, and project-based approaches can be solutions to maintain student interest and motivation. (Nisa & Susanto, 2022) Thus, digital education is not only an alternative but can also be an effective primary approach to creating meaningful and quality learning. (Kurniadi, 2021) However, other factors, such as conventional and monotonous teaching methods, often cause students to lose interest in learning. Therefore, educators are constantly seeking innovations to make the learning process more interesting and engaging. The use of educational games is an increasingly popular trend. (Nugroho, 2022)

Educational games are specifically designed for educational purposes. These games combine interactive elements and provide engaging gameplay with age-appropriate content. (Rosidah, 2022) They combine interactive elements and provide engaging gameplay with age-appropriate content. These games are played on computers, tablets, or smartphones. These games often utilize advanced technologies, such as virtual reality, simulations, and animations. To achieve optimal learning outcomes, the learning process must involve the utilization of information from various sources, including teaching materials, personal experiences, and social interactions that occur during the learning process. Learning is not merely about transferring knowledge but also aims to positively change students' behavior, thinking, and attitudes. Therefore, effective learning must be designed to create meaningful experiences that are relevant to students' lives.

If students feel comfortable, safe, and in an emotionally and physically supportive environment, learning can occur anywhere, not just in the classroom. A flexible and adaptive learning environment will facilitate students' independent access and processing of information. However, formal learning activities generally continue to take place in schools, particularly in the classroom, where teachers act as facilitators, motivators, and primary learning resources. The interaction between teachers and students in this context is crucial for guiding students in achieving expected competencies. Therefore, the synergy between the learning environment, information resources, and the role of educators is key to the success of a holistic learning process.

Learning is a fundamental and core aspect of curriculum implementation, as it is through this process that educational goals can be systematically achieved. In practice, the learning process is highly dependent on the learning media used. Learning media serve not only as aids but also as strategic tools for transferring knowledge, building skills, and shaping students' attitudes. The use of appropriate learning media allows for a more planned, interactive, and meaningful learning process. Thus, the learning experience provided to students becomes richer and more effective in supporting the achievement of expected competencies. One approach that is currently being widely developed is the integration of learning and educational games, particularly at the elementary school level. Elementary school-aged children tend to be active, enjoy playing, and easily bored by monotonous methods. Therefore, a game-based learning approach is an innovative solution for creating a fun learning environment. Research shows a positive correlation between playing educational games and student happiness levels. Students who enjoy the learning process are more motivated, focused, and understand the material more easily, resulting in graduates who are academically and emotionally well-rounded.

Educational games can be used to foster a willingness to learn. Educational games, as described in Andang Ismail's book "Learning Games," can provide fun and engaging experiences that can be used for educational purposes. Furthermore, educational games are characterized by: Fostering mental and creative development, Facilitating play for children, Providing safety/enjoyment, Enhancing learning, and Improving children's education. Primary education is the initial stage and a crucial foundation for shaping students' academic development, character, and thinking skills. At this level, children are experiencing rapid cognitive and affective development, so an appropriate learning approach is essential to foster their interest and motivation to learn. One approach that is increasingly being implemented is the use of educational games in the learning process. Educational games are media that combine learning elements with game elements, creating a more interactive, enjoyable, and meaningful learning experience.

With this approach, students not only passively receive information but are actively involved in activities that stimulate thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Furthermore, educational games are also able to adapt to the characteristics of elementary school-aged children, who tend to be active, enjoy challenges, and enjoy activities that contain elements of entertainment. The use of educational games in learning has been proven to improve conceptual understanding, strengthen memory, and reduce student boredom with subject matter considered difficult or boring. Therefore, integrating educational games into elementary education is an innovative strategy for creating more effective and enjoyable learning.

Elementary school children are characterized by a tendency to play, be active, and enjoy hanging out with their friends. Play activities are not merely entertainment for them, but also an important part of their physical, social, and emotional growth and development. However, when children enter a formal environment like school, they are faced with rules, structured learning schedules, and demands to sit still and focus for long periods. This situation often limits their freedom to play and express themselves. As a result, many students exhibit laziness, lack enthusiasm, and even lose interest in the lessons they are taught. A lack of variety in learning methods, a lack of fun approaches, and a lack of integration between play and learning also contribute to low student participation. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to understand children's basic characteristics and design learning that is fun, interactive, and contextual. A game-based learning approach or thematic learning that integrates physical and social activities can be a solution to increase elementary school students' motivation and create a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

2. Methods

The method used in this article is a qualitative research method with a literature review approach. This study aims to identify and analyze problems related to the world of children, particularly in the context of learning in elementary schools (SD). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena in depth through the interpretation of descriptive data. A literature review was conducted as the primary data collection technique by systematically examining various sources of information, such as scientific books, national and international journal articles, previous research results, and current news relevant to the issues discussed (Muhammad, 2014). The researcher acted as the primary instrument in the data exploration and analysis process. Data collection techniques were implemented through documentation and thematic recording from sources that had been selected based on criteria of validity and topic relevance. The data analysis process was carried out inductively, namely by interpreting data and identifying patterns or themes that emerged from various literature. Data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The final results of this study are descriptive qualitative, which aims to provide a comprehensive picture of issues related to children's education.

3. Findings and Discussions

The term "educational games" refers to a type of game specifically designed to support children's learning and development goals. These games contain educational elements that can stimulate students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. According to Syamsuardi (2012), educational games are a form of educational media that serves to increase the effectiveness of the learning process, especially for early childhood and elementary school children. Educational

games can help children learn in a fun and non-burdensome way, thus encouraging them to be more actively involved in learning activities.

The collection of educational games is very diverse, ranging from traditional classics to modern games based on digital technology, all of which have educational benefits tailored to the characteristics and ages of children. In addition to being a learning tool, these games also serve to enrich learning methods, make the learning environment more engaging, and boost student motivation. By integrating educational games into the learning process, teachers can create a more dynamic, creative, and enjoyable learning environment. This not only helps improve students' understanding of the material but also develops their social skills, teamwork, and creativity. Educational games are media specifically designed to support and reinforce learning goals.

The main characteristic of educational games is their ability to integrate learning objectives with interactive and fun teaching methods. These games are not only intended for entertainment, but also as pedagogical tools designed to help students understand lesson concepts more deeply through active learning experiences. Educational games can take the form of physical games such as board games, educational flashcards, or group activities in the classroom, as well as technology-based digital games such as learning apps, simulations, and interactive games accessible through electronic devices. Through these games, students are encouraged to engage in the learning process voluntarily, enthusiastically, and without pressure. The engaging and challenging activities in the games stimulate students' curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, this approach also strengthens social skills such as cooperation, communication, and sportsmanship. Thus, integrating educational games into learning can increase students' motivation, create a positive learning environment, and provide a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

Educational games are a type of game specifically designed to help students learn in a fun way while supporting their mental and physical health. These games combine interactive, visual, and audio elements to create an immersive and engaging learning experience. One of the key characteristics of educational games is their interactive nature, where students are actively involved in the learning process, not just as recipients of information, but also as key actors in exploration and problem-solving. Furthermore, educational games are structured, as they have clear learning objectives and present material systematically in an engaging and easy-to-understand game format. Games are also designed to be entertaining, with visual elements and challenges that adjust the level of difficulty to suit the student's abilities.

This ensures that the learning process does not become a burden, but rather a fun and motivating activity. Adjusting the level of difficulty is also important to prevent students from reaching the threshold of discomfort or boredom in learning. With these characteristics, educational games not only improve material comprehension but also build critical thinking and collaborative skills, and students' overall learning resilience. A literature review found strong evidence that using educational games can significantly increase elementary school children's desire to learn. Fun and interactive learning can be achieved through educational games, which are often effective. The use of challenges and engaging activities in educational games can foster greater curiosity and enthusiasm among students. Furthermore, educational games allow students to learn in a more hands-on, experimental way. They can try to solve problems in a safe and supportive environment without fear of real consequences for their mistakes. This, in part,

helps students gain confidence and motivation to continue learning even when faced with challenges.

Educational games can also be used to develop students' interest in ongoing lessons. By presenting learning content in an engaging and challenging way, educational games can maintain children's attention and encourage active participation in learning. This helps reduce boredom and fatigue common in traditional learning. Playing educational games allows students to learn in different ways. Furthermore, educational games can also improve children's understanding of ongoing lessons. Games can help students better understand a subject by giving students the opportunity to practice and apply their knowledge in relevant and engaging contexts.

This helps students build a strong foundation for longer learning sessions and more successful final exams and assignments. When designing and selecting educational games, there are several important things to consider to ensure they are effective and safe for children to use. First, games should be designed with components that are easy to disassemble and repair independently, facilitating maintenance and enhancing children's understanding of the game's function and structure. Second, educational games should ideally develop children's imagination and creativity. Toys that are flexible enough to be redesigned or modified will provide children with greater exploration and testing new ideas. Simple tools like colored markers, brushes, origami paper, and other drawing tools can be highly effective learning tools for stimulating children's creativity. Third, safety should not be overlooked. Toys should be free of sharp elements or hazardous materials that could harm children during play. According to children's toy experts, the risk of injury often arises from a lack of attention to safe toy design. Therefore, the ideal educational game should prioritize ease of use, stimulate imagination, and be safe for children in various learning activities.

Research findings show a significant increase in student motivation when learning through educational games compared to students who receive traditional classroom instruction. Playing educational games makes learning more engaging and interactive for students, which can increase their motivation and interest in the material being studied. Students' interest and motivation during the learning process can be fostered by using games to make learning more engaging and interactive. Extrinsic motivation is lower than intrinsic motivation, according to a more comprehensive analysis. Intrinsic motivation is higher than external incentives.

Educational games have several advantages that make them effective learning media, especially in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. One of their main advantages is their ability to increase student motivation and engagement. With a fun and challenging approach, educational games can capture students' attention and make them more active in participating in learning. Furthermore, educational games provide engaging and interactive learning experiences, enabling students to become more than passive recipients of information, but also directly involved in the learning process. This interaction creates a more lively and meaningful learning environment. Equally important, educational games also contribute to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through the challenges presented in the games, students are encouraged to analyze, make decisions, and find solutions independently or collaboratively. Thus, educational games serve not only as a means of entertainment but also as a strategic tool in developing students' overall cognitive competencies. Although educational games offer various benefits in the learning

process, there are a number of challenges and shortcomings that must be addressed in their implementation. One major obstacle is the limited availability of technology in some schools, particularly in remote areas or those with limited resources. Access to devices and internet networks hinders the use of digital games. Furthermore, the use of educational games must remain aligned with the applicable curriculum and teaching methods to avoid distracting from the primary learning objectives and to support the achievement of established competencies. Another equally important challenge relates to students' focus and concentration. If not used wisely, games can become a distraction and disrupt students' attention to the subject matter. Therefore, the use of educational games needs to be designed and controlled appropriately, both in terms of content, duration, and relevance to learning objectives, to ensure a truly positive impact and avoid negative effects on students' learning. The implications for education, particularly at the elementary school level, indicate that the use of educational games is an innovative teaching strategy capable of improving the quality of the learning process.

Educational games not only create a fun and interactive learning environment but also develop critical, collaborative, and creative thinking skills in students from an early age. To support the successful implementation of this strategy, educational policies that support learning innovation are needed, including the development of a curriculum that is open to game-based approaches. Furthermore, it is crucial to organize training and mentoring programs for teachers so they have the competence to select, design, and utilize educational games effectively and appropriately for student characteristics. Institutional support from schools and the government is also needed in the form of adequate infrastructure and resources. With an integrated and systematic approach, educational games have the potential to become a learning medium capable of addressing the challenges of 21st-century education and encouraging the creation of more contextual, adaptive, and meaningful learning experiences for students.

4. Conclusion

The use of educational games in elementary schools not only encourages learning but also improves students' academic achievement. According to the authors' findings, elementary school children can learn more through game-based learning due to its effectiveness in motivating them. Therefore, elementary school educators should consider incorporating educational games into their syllabi and teaching techniques to foster a more lively learning environment. Educational games have great potential to increase student motivation in elementary schools. Appropriate and safe use, supported by teacher training and accessible technology, can maximize the benefits of educational games in the learning process. Further research is needed to understand the challenges and explore the long-term impact. It is hoped that through the successful integration of games and educational objectives, students will be able to acquire various skills and provide a variety of benefits in the future. The use of educational games must also be balanced with appropriate game selection, close teacher observation, accurate assessment, and informed decision-making. Thus, games can have a positive impact on student motivation and progress in elementary school.

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