



Game Based Learning Strategy to Increase Students' Interest at SDN 3 Amadanom

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the application of Game-Based Learning strategies in increasing the learning interest of elementary school students, especially in grade III of SDN 3 Amadanom. The study involved one teacher as the main subject and used thematic analysis to process the interview results. The results of the study show that the application of GBL, especially through role-playing methods in cultural diversity materials, is able to create a fun, interactive, and collaborative learning atmosphere. This strategy not only increases student engagement and enthusiasm, but also strengthens understanding of concepts and social skills. While there are challenges such as differences in student character, limited facilities, and teacher readiness, these barriers can be overcome through inclusive learning innovations and teacher training. Thus, GBL has proven to be an adaptive, relevant, and effective strategy in answering learning challenges in the digital era and improving the quality of education in elementary schools.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and the digital revolution, technological developments have changed almost every aspect of life, including in the field of Education (Hermawanto and Anggraini 2020). Traditional and conventional learning systems are often seen as less effective in meeting the needs and characteristics of today's digital generation. At the elementary school level, as the main basis in the formation of children's character and knowledge, monotonous learning methods and little innovation have an impact on the low interest and motivation of students to learn (Siregar et al. 2024). Based on previous research, it was found that the delivery of static and less interactive material makes students feel bored, so their active participation in the learning process is reduced (Fahrurrazi, Setia, and Jayawardaya 2024). To address these issues, a new approach is needed that not only informs effectively, but also inspires and actively engages students. Game-Based Learning (GBL) emerged as an innovative learning strategy that integrates game elements in the learning process. GBL is a pedagogical approach that incorporates elements of play into learning activities with the aim of improving student motivation and learning outcomes (Nurjanah, Fitri, and Sa'adah 2024). The use of games in learning facilitates interaction, creativity, and problem-solving. By mixing elements of entertainment and competition, GBL is able to create an interactive learning environment, increase creativity, and arouse students' curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Through the use of digital technology, this learning strategy not only helps students understand concepts in depth, but also provides opportunities to hone problem-solving and collaborative skills (Fricitarani et al. 2023).

Based on this background, the problem faced in the context of learning in elementary school is the low interest in learning caused by less innovative methods of delivering material. Learning interest is defined as a student's tendency to pay attention and be actively involved in the learning process, which is an important factor in academic success (Uno 2021). Although many studies have shown that the implementation of GBL can increase learning participation and motivation, there is still little research that explores in depth how these learning strategies can be effectively integrated into the learning process at the elementary school level. This raises several research questions, including: How can the application of Game-Based Learning increase students' interest in learning? Is there a significant difference between students who experience learning through GBL and those who follow conventional methods, especially in terms of participation, engagement, and understanding of concepts? In addition, what factors affect the successful implementation of GBL? These questions are the basis for identifying gaps in the application of current learning methods and finding innovative solutions that can improve the quality of learning in schools

Although a number of studies have examined the general impact of the implementation of Game-Based Learning (GBL), few have specifically highlighted its role in learning cultural diversity at the elementary school level. In fact, this has an important role in creating a conducive learning environment,

where students can develop their potential optimally and obtain a positive and meaningful learning experience.

2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques to explore the perceptions and experiences of elementary school teachers regarding the effectiveness of using the Game-Based Learning (GBL) strategy in increasing students' interest in learning. This approach was chosen because it was able to provide a deeper understanding of the practices and challenges faced in the implementation of GBL in the classroom.

The subject in this study is Mrs. Tia Wahyu Kusumadhani, S.Pd., a grade III teacher at SDN 3 Amadanom, Dampit District, Malang Regency. He is an educator who has experience in implementing game-based learning strategies (GBL) in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. His experience in integrating elements of play into learning makes an important contribution to increasing student motivation and engagement, making it very relevant to be used as the subject of this research.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques to identify key patterns related to student engagement and concept understanding. The data validation process is carried out through source triangulation and member checking, to ensure the accuracy and validity of the information obtained from the research subjects

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Based on the results of the interview with Mrs. Tia Wahyu Kusumadhani, S.Pd., it is known that the game-based learning method or Game-Based Learning (GBL) has been applied in the teaching and learning process in grade III, especially in the subject of Pancasila Education with the topic of ethnic and cultural diversity in Indonesia. Teachers choose GBL strategies to help students understand cultures from different regions through an approach role-playing, which has proven effective in creating a fun and interactive learning atmosphere.

The main reason for the application of this method is to increase students' interest and engagement during the learning process. Play activities create an atmosphere that makes students feel more engaged and motivated to learn. Some of the types of games used include singing and playing outside the classroom. This activity provides an opportunity for students to move and interact with classmates, so that the learning process becomes more fun.

The students' response to this activity was also very positive. They show high enthusiasm and activity. As the teacher said, "The students laughed, helped each other, and really understood the meaning of diversity," said Mrs. Tia, a teacher from grade III of SDN 3 Amadanom.

Teachers emphasize that the GBL approach can increase students' interest in learning by providing an engaging and enjoyable learning experience, which ultimately encourages students to be more focused and active. However, in its implementation, there are still several challenges such as the lack of learning innovation, limited facilities, and the existence of students who tend to be quiet and reluctant to interact so that they are not involved in group games. This condition is a challenge for teachers in creating an inclusive learning atmosphere for all students.

Overall, Mrs. Tia Wahyu Kusumadhani argued that the GBL strategy is more effective than conventional methods, especially for grade III students who are still in the developmental stage dominated by play activities.

Table 1. Impact of Game Based Learning Implementation

Aspects	Before GBL	After GBL
Participation	Passive and monotonous	Active and enthusiastic
Concept Understanding	Weak and abstract	Stronger and more concrete
Collaboration	Rarely appears	Helping each other in groups

Table 2. Summary of the Results of the Implementation of GBL in Class III SDN 3 Amadanom

Aspects	Information
Subjects	Pancasila Education (Material on Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia)
Purpose	Increase student interest in learning and engagement
Applied GBL model	Role-playing, singing, playing outside of class
Positive impact	The learning atmosphere is more fun, students are more active, enthusiasm increases
Challenge	Lack of teacher innovation, limited facilities, quiet students lack participation
Solution	Making games more inclusive, intensive mentoring of quiet students, teacher innovation training Lack of teacher innovation, limited facilities, quiet students lack participation

3.2 Discussion

First, from the aspect of student participation, before the implementation of the GBL strategy in the classroom, students tended to be passive and showed a less enthusiastic attitude during the learning process. Learning takes place in only one direction, dominated by the teacher's explanation without much active involvement of the students. This causes students to easily feel bored and lose motivation to follow the learning materials (Susanti et al. 2024). However, after the implementation of GBL, especially through the role-playing method, students became much more active and enthusiastic. Learning activities designed in a more fun and challenging way that encourage students to engage more actively (Kustati and Amelia 2024). After this strategy was applied, they seemed more courageous to appear in front of the class, discuss with their classmates, and actively ask and answer questions from the teacher. This shows that GBL has succeeded in creating a learning environment that encourages active participation, where students feel more valued and involved in the learning process.

Second, in terms of understanding concepts, many students previously still had difficulty understanding abstract material, such as the meaning of cultural diversity, the value of tolerance, and social differences. Without real context or hands-on experience, students often simply memorize definitions without really understanding their meanings (Darmastuti and Desstyia 2024). In situations like this, GBL is present as one of the solutions that can help solve these problems. By utilizing simulations, role-playing, and real-life scenarios, students can relate knowledge to their personal experiences (Ummah et al. 2023). For example, when students play the role of representatives of different regions, they not only get to know other cultures, but also get a first-hand feel about what it's like to be part of a diverse community. Experiences like this foster deeper understanding, as students learn not only by listening or reading, but also by experiencing them directly through contextual play (Habib 2024).

Third, from the aspect of collaboration, previous learning activities were more dominated by individual work, while group work was less effective and often only in the form of a mere formality because many were found in group assignments often not complete between all group members working on the assigned tasks but only a few individuals (Ambarita, SIMANULLANG, and Adab 2023). This makes students tend to work independently without a constructive process of exchanging ideas. However, after the implementation of GBL, students showed a significant increase in collaborative spirit. In developing game scenarios, determining roles, and solving existing challenges, they must work together, share ideas, and help each other. This process indirectly trains students in communication skills, tolerance, and teamwork. GBL creates a safe and fun space for students to learn together, respect each other, and learn to resolve conflicts constructively. Therefore, GBL not only strengthens the cognitive aspects of students, but also develops social and emotional skills that are very important in social life (Afriansyah, Arif, and Islam 2024).

Fourth, in terms of attitudes towards cultural diversity, before the implementation of GBL, students seemed disinterested and viewed the topic of diversity as boring and far from their daily lives. The lack of a contextual approach causes students to be unable to relate the material to personal experiences, so that national values and tolerance are not effectively embedded (Siahaan and Marpaung 2025). However, after GBL was implemented, there was a quite striking change in attitude. Students become more open and curious about other cultures. They began to show interest in getting to know customs, traditional clothing, typical foods, and languages from other regions. In fact, according to one of the teachers interviewed, students began to actively ask about the cultural background of their friends, so that things began to appear that had never appeared in their interactions before. This proves that GBL not only provides conceptual understanding, but also forms a positive attitude towards diversity, as well as fostering mutual respect in the learning environment.

Although the implementation of Game Based Learning provides various benefits, challenges are still encountered, especially those related to the diversity of students' characters. Teachers realize that not all students are actively involved in the game, especially those who tend to be quiet or lack trust. This indicates that the implementation of GBL requires the right strategy so that all students can participate optimally according to each student's learning style. In addition, other factors such as teacher readiness, mastery of technology, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure also play an important role in determining the effectiveness of the implementation of GBL. Teachers who are creative and able to design games that are contextual and relevant to learning objectives have greater potential to improve student learning outcomes. (Rahmadani et al. 2024)

Overall, GBL proved to be a learning strategy that was not only fun, but also effective in building understanding of concepts, active engagement, and positive attitudes towards material oriented towards national values. This approach is able to integrate affective, cognitive, and social aspects harmoniously in one learning activity. In the context of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes meaningful and student-centered learning, GBL is very relevant to be applied more widely. Teachers can adjust the form of the game to the needs and character of students so that learning becomes more real, fun, and beneficial for all students (Jul 2023).

Therefore, GBL deserves consideration as a strategic approach in thematic learning, especially in shaping the character of students who are tolerant, collaborative, and open-minded to the diversity of Indonesian culture. This strategy demonstrates its effectiveness in creating an active, collaborative, and meaningful learning atmosphere. Therefore, it is important for educators to continue to develop GBL learning strategies in a sustainable and contextual manner, as well as receive support from schools to optimize their implementation. Therefore, this shows that GBL can be one of the relevant and adaptive learning strategies in increasing students' interest in learning, especially in elementary schools such as SDN 3 Amadanom, as well as answering educational challenges in today's digital era.

3.3 Conclusion

The Game-Based Learning (GBL) strategy implemented at SDN 3 Amadanom has proven to have a significant positive impact on the thematic learning process, especially on cultural diversity materials. This approach is able to increase students' active participation, strengthen understanding of concepts that were previously considered abstract, and encourage collaboration skills and an open attitude towards diversity. Through methods such as role-playing and simulation, students find it easier to relate material to personal experiences so that contextual, fun, and meaningful learning is created. In addition, GBL also strengthens the social-emotional dimension of students by accustoming them to work together, discuss, and resolve conflicts constructively in an inclusive learning environment. This approach is in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes student-centered learning and fostering character. However, the implementation of GBL still faces challenges, such as uneven student involvement, especially for those who tend to be quiet or lack confidence, as well as limitations in terms of facilities, teacher readiness, and mastery of technology. Therefore, the implementation of GBL requires creativity, adaptation, and full support from schools so that this strategy can be implemented effectively and sustainably. Overall, GBL is a relevant, innovative, and adaptive learning approach in responding to educational challenges in the digital era, while being able to form students who are active, collaborative, tolerant, and open-minded to Indonesia's cultural diversity.

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