

Students' Perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game in Supporting English Learning: Evidence from an Indonesian Elementary School

Hery Kiswanto¹, Elsayed Mohamed Salem Salem Elawadi²

¹Dosen Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam STAI Hubbulwathan
Jl. Karya KM. 7 Desa Balaimakam Duri-Riau, 84784

²Dosen Al-Madinah International University- Malaysia

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*Corresponding Author:

herykiswanto1@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate Islamic elementary school students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game in supporting English learning during English Club activities at SDS IT Mutiara Pinggir, Indonesia. A quantitative descriptive survey design was employed involving 126 students from Grades 2 to 6 selected through proportional sampling. Data were collected using a 10-item Likert-scale questionnaire covering five dimensions: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, enjoyment, learning motivation, and engagement. The instrument met acceptable psychometric standards, with all items declared valid ($r\text{-count} > r\text{-table} = 0.174$) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.622). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean, percentage, and mode. The findings revealed consistently positive student perceptions across all dimensions, with mean scores ranging from 3.36 to 3.63 on a four-point scale. Perceived enjoyment emerged as the highest-rated dimension, while learning motivation received the lowest, although it remained within the positive category. Overall, students considered the Word Search Puzzle Game useful, easy to use, enjoyable, and capable of promoting active engagement in English learning. The study concludes that the Word Search Puzzle Game represents an effective and practical supplementary learning medium for fostering positive learning experiences and vocabulary development in elementary English education.



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INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the essential competencies that elementary school students are expected to develop in response to the increasing demands of global communication. Although English is not the primary language of instruction in Indonesian elementary schools, many Islamic elementary schools have introduced English through extracurricular programs, such as English Clubs, to strengthen students' basic communication skills and vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary mastery is widely recognized as the foundation of language development because it supports learners' ability to comprehend texts, express ideas, and participate in oral communication. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students often encounter difficulties in developing other language skills,

including reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Consequently, creating learning experiences that encourage active vocabulary acquisition has become an important concern for English teachers at the elementary level (Sofiana et al., 2025).

Despite the increasing attention devoted to English instruction in elementary education, vocabulary learning continues to present considerable challenges. Traditional instructional practices frequently rely on memorization, translation, and repetitive drills, resulting in passive classroom participation and declining learning motivation. Young learners generally require learning activities that are interactive, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate. When classroom activities fail to provide meaningful engagement, students tend to lose concentration quickly, reducing both participation and vocabulary retention. These conditions are particularly evident in extracurricular English learning environments where participation depends largely on students' intrinsic interest rather than formal academic assessment. Therefore, teachers increasingly seek instructional approaches capable of transforming vocabulary learning into an enjoyable and meaningful experience without reducing its educational value (Pratiwi et al., 2025).

Game-based learning has emerged as one of the instructional approaches capable of addressing these challenges. Educational games integrate cognitive activities with enjoyable experiences, allowing students to learn through exploration, competition, collaboration, and problem solving. Rather than functioning merely as entertainment, educational games create opportunities for repeated exposure to vocabulary while simultaneously maintaining learners' attention throughout classroom activities. Recent studies have consistently demonstrated that game-based learning contributes positively to students' motivation, engagement, participation, and vocabulary achievement in elementary education. Interactive learning environments also encourage learners to become more actively involved in constructing their own understanding instead of passively receiving information from teachers (Riyadi1 et al., 2025).

Among various game-based learning media, the Word Search Puzzle Game represents a simple yet pedagogically meaningful instructional tool. Students are challenged to identify target words within a grid of letters, encouraging repeated visual recognition, spelling awareness, and vocabulary reinforcement. Because the game combines learning objectives with puzzle-solving activities, it can stimulate curiosity while reducing the anxiety that often accompanies foreign language learning. Unlike many digital learning applications requiring advanced technological infrastructure, the Word Search Puzzle Game can be implemented easily in both printed and digital formats, making it particularly suitable for elementary schools with varying levels of technological resources. Recent classroom-based studies have reported that Word Search activities contribute positively to vocabulary development while increasing students' enthusiasm during English lessons.

The growing body of literature has provided valuable evidence regarding the effectiveness of educational games for improving vocabulary learning. For example, Sofiana et al. developed the *Lingo Climb* game and demonstrated that culturally relevant game-based learning significantly enhanced elementary students' vocabulary mastery and classroom engagement. Likewise, studies employing Kahoot, Guess the Word, and other vocabulary games have consistently reported improvements in students' learning motivation, participation, and vocabulary achievement. Systematic reviews have further concluded that

game-based learning creates more interactive learning environments while supporting better academic outcomes among young learners (Sofiana et al., 2025).

Although these previous studies have enriched understanding of game-based learning, several limitations remain. First, most existing research evaluates the effectiveness of educational games using experimental or quasi-experimental designs that primarily focus on learning outcomes such as vocabulary scores or academic achievement. Comparatively fewer studies investigate how students themselves perceive the instructional media they use during learning. Yet students' perceptions constitute an important dimension because positive perceptions frequently determine whether learners willingly participate, remain motivated, and continue using particular learning media. A learning medium that is statistically effective may not necessarily be perceived positively by students, whereas favorable perceptions often contribute to sustained engagement and meaningful learning experiences (Loreana et al., 2024).

Second, previous investigations generally concentrate on a limited number of psychological dimensions, such as motivation or enjoyment, while overlooking the multidimensional nature of students' acceptance of instructional media. Educational technology research suggests that learners' acceptance is influenced not only by enjoyment but also by perceived usefulness, ease of use, learning motivation, and engagement, all of which interact to shape students' willingness to participate in learning activities. Examining these dimensions simultaneously provides a more comprehensive understanding of how students experience game-based learning than focusing on a single psychological construct. Nevertheless, empirical studies integrating these dimensions within elementary English learning remain relatively limited, particularly in Indonesian Islamic elementary school settings (Loreana et al., 2024).

Finally, research specifically investigating the Word Search Puzzle Game in Indonesian Islamic elementary schools is still scarce. Existing studies predominantly emphasize improvements in vocabulary achievement after instructional interventions, while relatively little attention has been given to students' own evaluations of the learning experience. This gap is important because Islamic elementary schools often combine academic instruction with distinctive educational values that emphasize active participation, collaborative learning, and positive character development. Understanding how Islamic elementary students perceive the usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, motivation, and engagement generated by the Word Search Puzzle Game may therefore provide valuable insights for teachers seeking practical, low-cost, and student-centered instructional strategies that can enrich extracurricular English learning (Marlinda, 2025).

The present study is conceptually grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which has been extensively employed to explain learners' acceptance of educational technologies and game-based learning environments. TAM proposes that users' decisions to adopt a learning technology are primarily influenced by two beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. When students perceive a learning medium as useful for improving their learning performance and sufficiently easy to operate, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the medium and continue using it. Recent systematic reviews have confirmed that these two constructs remain the strongest predictors of students' acceptance

of educational games across diverse educational contexts. Moreover, contemporary studies suggest that the original TAM can be strengthened by incorporating affective variables, particularly perceived enjoyment, because learning games combine cognitive processes with emotional experiences that shape students' willingness to engage in learning activities.

Beyond technology acceptance, this study also draws upon Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to explain the motivational dimension of game-based learning. SDT argues that learners demonstrate higher intrinsic motivation when learning activities satisfy their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Educational games provide opportunities for learners to solve problems independently, receive immediate feedback, and experience a sense of achievement after completing learning tasks. These positive experiences foster enjoyment, strengthen intrinsic motivation, and encourage students to participate more actively during instruction. In elementary education, where students' attention spans are relatively limited, learning activities that generate enjoyment and meaningful challenges are more likely to sustain motivation than conventional teacher-centered instruction. These theoretical perspectives help explain why game-based learning frequently produces not only cognitive gains but also improvements in learners' emotional engagement.

Another important construct underlying this research is student engagement, which refers to learners' active behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement throughout the learning process. Engagement has increasingly been recognized as one of the strongest indicators of successful classroom learning because engaged students devote greater attention, persist longer when encountering difficulties, and participate more actively in instructional activities. In game-based learning environments, engagement is generated through meaningful challenges, immediate feedback, curiosity, and interactive experiences that encourage continuous participation. Recent literature reviews consistently report that educational games enhance students' engagement while simultaneously supporting learning motivation, concentration, and academic achievement. Consequently, examining engagement alongside students' perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, and motivation provides a more comprehensive understanding of how learners experience educational games (Sun et al., 2024).

Drawing upon these theoretical perspectives, the present study adopts five interrelated dimensions to evaluate students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, learning motivation, and engagement. Perceived usefulness reflects students' beliefs that the game facilitates English vocabulary learning. Perceived ease of use concerns the simplicity of understanding and operating the game during learning activities. Perceived enjoyment represents students' positive emotional responses while participating in the game. Learning motivation indicates the extent to which the game stimulates students' willingness to learn English, whereas engagement reflects students' active participation and sustained attention during English Club activities. Although these dimensions are conceptually distinct, they are logically interconnected. A learning medium that is easy to use is generally perceived as more useful, greater usefulness and ease of use contribute to higher enjoyment, enjoyable learning experiences strengthen intrinsic motivation, and increased motivation ultimately encourages stronger behavioral and cognitive engagement throughout the learning process. This

conceptual relationship is also consistent with recent educational game acceptance research that integrates cognitive and affective determinants of technology use .

Despite the increasing number of publications on educational games, an important research gap remains. Existing studies predominantly investigate whether educational games improve vocabulary achievement, academic performance, or learning outcomes through experimental comparisons. Relatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding how elementary school students evaluate their learning experiences after interacting with a particular educational game. Furthermore, previous studies often examine only one or two psychological constructs, such as motivation or enjoyment, without considering a multidimensional perception framework that simultaneously incorporates usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, motivation, and engagement. Such an integrated perspective is particularly relevant because students' acceptance of learning media depends not only on instructional effectiveness but also on their cognitive evaluations and emotional experiences during learning. This gap becomes even more evident within Indonesian Islamic elementary schools, where empirical evidence concerning students' perceptions of simple, low-cost educational games remains scarce.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to investigate Islamic elementary school students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game in supporting English learning. Specifically, the study examines students' perceptions regarding the game's usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, motivation, and engagement during English Club activities. Rather than measuring learning achievement, this research emphasizes learners' experiences as the primary source of evidence for evaluating the educational value of the game. Such an approach is expected to provide richer pedagogical insights into how students respond to interactive learning media implemented in extracurricular English programs.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question:

How do Islamic elementary school students perceive the usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, motivation, and engagement of the Word Search Puzzle Game in supporting English learning during English Club activities?

The findings are expected to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, this study extends previous research by adopting a multidimensional perception framework that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of students' experiences with educational games. Second, it provides empirical evidence from the context of an Indonesian Islamic elementary school, which remains underrepresented in international studies on game-based English learning. Finally, the findings offer practical implications for English teachers and school administrators by demonstrating how a simple and inexpensive instructional medium such as the Word Search Puzzle Game can support enjoyable, engaging, and student-centered English learning. These insights may inform the design of extracurricular English programs that prioritize not only academic achievement but also positive learning experiences capable of sustaining students' long-term interest in language learning.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to investigate students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game in supporting English learning during English Club activities. A descriptive survey was considered appropriate because the study aimed to describe students' perceptions without manipulating the learning environment or introducing experimental treatments. This design enables researchers to obtain a comprehensive overview of participants' attitudes and perceptions toward a particular educational phenomenon (CRESWELL, 2019).

The research was conducted at SDS IT Mutiara Pinggir, an Islamic elementary school located in Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia. The school integrates the Indonesian national curriculum with the Integrated Islamic School Network (JSIT) curriculum and offers an extracurricular English Club to strengthen students' English communication skills. The English Club regularly incorporates interactive vocabulary activities, making it an appropriate setting for investigating students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game as a supplementary learning medium.

The target population consisted of all students participating in the English Club during the 2025/2026 academic year. Because the total population was manageable, the study employed proportional sampling, resulting in 126 students from Grades 2 to 6 as research participants. The sample represented learners with different levels of English proficiency and learning experience, allowing the study to capture perceptions across various elementary grade levels.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Participants

Grade	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Grade 2	25	19.8
Grade 3	25	19.8
Grade 4	25	19.8
Grade 5	25	19.8
Grade 6	26	20.6

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 10 statements measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was developed based on five perception dimensions derived from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the literature on game-based learning: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, learning motivation, and student engagement. Each construct was represented by two questionnaire items to provide balanced coverage of the investigated dimensions.

Prior to data collection, the questionnaire underwent psychometric evaluation to examine its validity and reliability. Item validity was assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, with each item's correlation coefficient compared to the critical value at the 5% significance level. All questionnaire items exceeded the required threshold ($r\text{-count} > 0.174$), indicating satisfactory construct validity. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, producing a coefficient of 0.622, which exceeds the minimum acceptable value of 0.60 for exploratory educational research and indicates that the instrument possessed adequate reliability for measuring students' perceptions (Taber, 2018).

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with Microsoft Excel. Mean scores were calculated to determine the overall tendency of students' perceptions, percentages were used to describe the distribution of responses across each Likert-scale category, and mode values were identified to determine the most frequently selected

responses. These descriptive measures provided a comprehensive overview of students' perceptions toward the Word Search Puzzle Game across the five investigated dimensions. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school administration before data collection commenced. Participation was voluntary, and students completed the questionnaire anonymously. The researcher informed participants that the collected data would be used solely for academic purposes and reported only in aggregate form to ensure confidentiality and protect participants' privacy. Since the respondents were elementary school students, the questionnaire was administered during regular English Club activities under teacher supervision to ensure that participants clearly understood each statement before providing their responses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Participants

The study involved 126 students enrolled in the English Club at SDS IT Mutiara Pinggir. Participants were selected using proportional sampling from Grades 2 to 6 to ensure that students from different educational levels were represented. The distribution of respondents was relatively balanced across grade levels, allowing the findings to reflect students' perceptions from both lower and upper elementary grades.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Grade	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Grade 2	25	19.8
Grade 3	25	19.8
Grade 4	25	19.8
Grade 5	25	19.8
Grade 6	26	20.6
Total	126	100

Regarding gender, 62 participants (49.2%) were male and 64 (50.8%) were female, indicating a nearly equal gender distribution. Such balance minimizes demographic bias and provides a representative overview of students' perceptions toward the Word Search Puzzle Game. Because the participants came from different grade levels, they also represented varying English proficiency levels, enabling this study to capture perceptions from learners with different vocabulary knowledge and learning experiences.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Prior to the main analysis, the questionnaire was evaluated to ensure its psychometric quality. Item validity was examined using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, while internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha. The validity analysis showed that all questionnaire items exceeded the minimum correlation coefficient ($r\text{-table} = 0.174$), indicating that every statement measured the intended construct.

Table 3. Validity Test Results

Item	r-count	r-table	Decision
Q1	0.378	0.174	Valid
Q2	0.288	0.174	Valid
Q3	0.380	0.174	Valid
Q4	0.321	0.174	Valid
Q5	0.258	0.174	Valid
Q6	0.338	0.174	Valid
Q7	0.354	0.174	Valid
Q8	0.308	0.174	Valid
Q9	0.357	0.174	Valid
Q10	0.360	0.174	Valid

The questionnaire also demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.622, exceeding the minimum recommended threshold of 0.60 for exploratory educational research. These findings indicate that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for measuring students' perceptions.

Table 4. Reliability Test Result

Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
0.622	Reliable

Students' Perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game

The research question sought to investigate students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game in supporting English learning. Five dimensions were examined: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, learning motivation, and engagement.

Perceived Usefulness

The usefulness dimension received highly favorable responses from participants. Students agreed that the Word Search Puzzle Game assisted them in understanding English vocabulary and stimulated their interest in learning English. The mean scores ranged from 3.51 to 3.58, while between 94% and 95% of respondents selected either *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*. The dominant response for both items was *Strongly Agree*.

Table 4. Perceived Usefulness

Statement	Mean	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Mode
Helps students understand English vocabulary	3.51	95	4

Increases students' interest in learning English	3.58	94	4
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These findings indicate that students viewed the game as more than a recreational activity. Instead, they perceived it as an instructional medium that facilitated vocabulary acquisition while simultaneously increasing their enthusiasm for learning English. The consistently high agreement suggests that students recognized the educational value of integrating word-search activities into English Club sessions.

Perceived Ease of Use

Students also expressed positive perceptions regarding the usability of the Word Search Puzzle Game. The mean scores ranged between **3.42 and 3.44**, with approximately **88–90%** of respondents agreeing that both the game mechanics and its instructions were easy to understand.

Table 5. Perceived Ease of Use

Statement	Mean	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Mode
The game is easy to play	3.44	88	4
The instructions are easy to understand	3.42	90	4

The findings demonstrate that the game required minimal assistance from teachers before students could participate independently. The simplicity of the game mechanics enabled learners to concentrate on vocabulary learning rather than technical procedures, thereby creating a smoother learning experience during English Club activities.

Perceived Enjoyment

Among the five dimensions, enjoyment received the highest evaluation. Students strongly agreed that playing the Word Search Puzzle Game was enjoyable and that it made English Club sessions more interesting. The highest mean score in the entire questionnaire (M = 3.63) was obtained for the statement *"Playing the Word Search Puzzle Game is enjoyable."*

Table 6. Perceived Enjoyment

Statement	Mean	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Mode
Playing the game is enjoyable	3.63	98	4
I enjoy English Club when using the game	3.48	96	4

These results suggest that enjoyment was a prominent feature of students' learning experiences. Rather than perceiving English vocabulary practice as repetitive, students experienced it as an engaging activity that encouraged continued participation throughout the learning process.

Perceived Learning Motivation

Students also reported that the Word Search Puzzle Game positively influenced their motivation to learn English. Mean scores ranged from 3.36 to 3.48, while positive responses exceeded 90% for both questionnaire items.

Table 7. Learning Motivation

Statement	Mean	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Mode
The game motivates me to learn English	3.48	96	4
I participate more actively because of the game	3.36	92	4

Although the second statement obtained the lowest mean among all questionnaire items, the overall responses remained strongly positive. These findings indicate that the game not only stimulated students' interest but also encouraged them to become more active participants during English Club activities.

Perceived Engagement

Positive perceptions were likewise observed in the engagement dimension. Students reported that the Word Search Puzzle Game helped them remain actively involved and maintain concentration during learning activities.

Table 8. Student Engagement

Statement	Mean	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)	Mode
I feel actively engaged while playing	3.44	93	4
The game helps me stay focused	3.46	91	4

The consistently high levels of agreement indicate that the game successfully promoted active participation throughout English Club sessions. Students remained cognitively engaged while completing the puzzles and demonstrated sustained attention during vocabulary-learning activities.

Summary of Results

Across all five dimensions, students demonstrated consistently positive perceptions toward the Word Search Puzzle Game. Mean scores ranged from 3.36 to 3.63, with the majority of respondents selecting either Agree or Strongly Agree for every questionnaire item. Among the investigated dimensions, perceived enjoyment received the highest evaluation, whereas learning motivation recorded the lowest mean score, although it remained within the positive category. Overall, these findings suggest that the Word Search Puzzle Game was well accepted by elementary school students and served as an interactive learning medium that supported vocabulary learning while fostering enjoyment, motivation, and active engagement during English Club activities.

The present study investigated Islamic elementary school students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game as a supporting medium for English learning. Overall, the findings demonstrate that students responded positively across all measured dimensions,

including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, enjoyment, motivation, and engagement. These results indicate that students viewed the Word Search Puzzle Game not merely as a recreational activity but as a learning resource capable of facilitating vocabulary acquisition while creating a more engaging classroom atmosphere. The consistently positive responses across all indicators suggest that the game successfully integrated cognitive and affective aspects of language learning.

The positive perception of usefulness supports the central proposition of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which states that individuals are more likely to accept and continue using a learning technology when they perceive it as beneficial to their learning performance (Davis, 1989). In the present study, students believed that the Word Search Puzzle Game helped them understand English vocabulary and increased their interest in learning English. This finding indicates that even a relatively simple game can provide meaningful learning experiences when it is closely aligned with instructional objectives. Unlike many digital learning applications that require sophisticated technological infrastructure, the Word Search Puzzle Game demonstrates that instructional value depends more on pedagogical design than on technological complexity.

The finding also reinforces previous studies reporting that game-based vocabulary activities improve learners' perceptions of usefulness because they encourage repeated exposure to target vocabulary in meaningful contexts. For example, Kalogiannakis et al. (2021) found that educational games contribute to improved language learning outcomes by encouraging active participation and meaningful interaction during classroom activities. Likewise, the systematic review conducted by Tsai and Tsai (2024) concluded that educational games positively influence students' learning experiences by integrating instructional objectives with enjoyable classroom practices. The consistency between those studies and the present findings suggests that the educational value of game-based learning is evident not only in technologically advanced classrooms but also in elementary schools with relatively limited instructional resources.

Students also reported that the Word Search Puzzle Game was easy to understand and simple to play. This finding further supports the second core component of TAM, namely perceived ease of use. Davis (1989) argued that learning technologies are more readily accepted when users can operate them without unnecessary cognitive effort. In the present study, students experienced little difficulty understanding the game instructions, allowing them to devote greater attention to vocabulary learning rather than learning how to use the medium itself. This finding is particularly relevant for elementary school learners, whose cognitive resources should be directed toward language acquisition rather than navigating complicated instructional procedures.

The positive evaluation of ease of use may also be explained by the characteristics of the participants. Since the respondents were elementary school students with diverse English proficiency levels, a learning medium requiring minimal technical skills became particularly appropriate. The visual simplicity of the Word Search Puzzle Game enables younger learners to participate alongside older students without creating substantial differences in classroom participation. Consequently, the game offers an inclusive learning environment in which learners with varying language abilities can engage in similar learning experiences.

Among all investigated dimensions, enjoyment emerged as the strongest aspect of students' perceptions. This finding is theoretically consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes that enjoyable learning experiences strengthen intrinsic motivation because learners participate voluntarily rather than solely to fulfill external requirements (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Students in this study expressed genuine enjoyment while completing vocabulary puzzles, indicating that positive emotions became an integral component of their learning experience. Rather than perceiving vocabulary exercises as repetitive memorization tasks, they viewed them as meaningful challenges that stimulated curiosity and sustained attention.

These findings correspond with recent evidence highlighting the importance of emotional engagement in game-based learning. A review by Bayeck (2020) concluded that educational games create positive emotional experiences that contribute to deeper learning engagement and greater persistence in completing instructional tasks. Similarly, Zainuddin et al. (2020) reported that gamified learning environments encourage students to remain actively involved because they combine challenge, immediate feedback, and enjoyment within meaningful educational activities. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that similar emotional benefits can also be observed in non-digital word games implemented within extracurricular English learning contexts.

The positive perceptions regarding learning motivation and student engagement further strengthen the argument that interactive learning media influence not only students' attitudes but also their behavioral involvement in classroom activities. Students indicated that the Word Search Puzzle Game encouraged them to participate more actively and maintain concentration during English Club sessions. Although the motivation dimension obtained slightly lower mean scores than enjoyment and usefulness, students nevertheless expressed favorable perceptions across all questionnaire items. This suggests that enjoyment alone is insufficient to sustain learning; instead, enjoyable activities must also be perceived as educationally meaningful before they can strengthen students' motivation to learn.

The relationship between enjoyment, motivation, and engagement observed in this study is consistent with contemporary perspectives on student engagement. Fredricks et al. (2023) argued that engagement encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that interact dynamically throughout the learning process. In the present study, students' enjoyment appears to have encouraged greater emotional engagement, which subsequently supported behavioral participation and sustained attention during classroom activities. This interconnected relationship indicates that game-based learning may influence multiple dimensions of learning simultaneously rather than affecting isolated educational outcomes.

Compared with previous studies, the present research contributes additional evidence from the context of Islamic elementary education in Indonesia, a setting that remains underrepresented in international literature on game-based language learning. Most existing studies have been conducted in secondary schools, universities, or technologically advanced learning environments. In contrast, this study demonstrates that positive student perceptions can also emerge in an extracurricular English program utilizing a relatively simple instructional medium. The findings therefore broaden current understanding by showing that educational effectiveness is not exclusively determined by digital sophistication

but also by the compatibility between instructional design, learner characteristics, and classroom context.

Another contribution of this study lies in its focus on students' perceptions rather than vocabulary achievement. Previous investigations have frequently emphasized learning outcomes measured through achievement tests. While such studies provide evidence regarding instructional effectiveness, they often overlook learners' subjective experiences. By examining students' perceptions across five complementary dimensions, the present study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how learners evaluate educational games before measurable academic improvement occurs. Positive perceptions are important because they influence students' willingness to continue participating in learning activities over time.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings strengthen the applicability of the Technology Acceptance Model within elementary language education. The results suggest that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use remain relevant predictors of students' acceptance of interactive learning media, even when the instructional medium is a simple paper-based or printed game rather than advanced educational technology. Furthermore, the findings complement Self-Determination Theory by illustrating how enjoyable learning experiences contribute to stronger motivation and greater classroom engagement. Together, these theoretical perspectives explain how cognitive evaluation and emotional experience jointly shape students' acceptance of instructional media.

The study also provides practical implications for English teachers and curriculum developers. First, teachers may integrate Word Search Puzzle Games as supplementary activities for vocabulary reinforcement because they require relatively little preparation while promoting active classroom participation. Second, schools with limited technological facilities may implement similar game-based activities without substantial financial investment. Third, extracurricular English programs can benefit from incorporating collaborative puzzle-solving activities that encourage communication and peer interaction while maintaining students' interest throughout the learning process.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study employed a descriptive survey design; therefore, causal relationships between students' perceptions and vocabulary achievement cannot be established. The participants were drawn from a single Islamic elementary school, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. In addition, the study relied exclusively on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be influenced by respondents' subjective interpretations and social desirability bias.

Future research should employ experimental or mixed-methods designs to examine whether positive perceptions toward the Word Search Puzzle Game are accompanied by measurable improvements in vocabulary mastery and language proficiency. Studies involving multiple schools, different educational levels, and more diverse cultural contexts would also enhance the external validity of the findings. Furthermore, future investigations may explore how learner characteristics, such as English proficiency, learning styles, or digital literacy, influence students' perceptions of game-based learning media.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined Islamic elementary school students' perceptions of the Word Search Puzzle Game as a supplementary medium for English learning in an extracurricular English Club program. Overall, the findings demonstrate that students perceived the game positively across all measured dimensions, namely perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, enjoyment, learning motivation, and engagement. These results suggest that the Word Search Puzzle Game was well accepted by students and successfully created a learning environment that was interactive, enjoyable, and supportive of vocabulary learning.

The findings contribute to the growing body of research on game-based language learning by providing empirical evidence from the context of an Indonesian Islamic elementary school. While previous studies have primarily emphasized learning achievement or digital game implementation, this study highlights the importance of students' perceptions as an essential indicator of the successful adoption of interactive learning media. Positive perceptions of usefulness and ease of use were accompanied by favorable emotional responses, indicating that simple educational games can support both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning. These findings reinforce the relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model and Self-Determination Theory in explaining students' acceptance of game-based learning activities at the elementary education level.

From a practical perspective, the study suggests that English teachers may incorporate the Word Search Puzzle Game into vocabulary instruction as an affordable and accessible learning strategy. The game requires minimal technological resources, making it particularly suitable for schools with limited educational facilities while still encouraging active participation, sustained attention, and meaningful classroom interaction. The findings also provide useful insights for curriculum developers seeking to integrate engaging learning activities into extracurricular English programs.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The research employed a descriptive survey design involving participants from a single Islamic elementary school; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. In addition, the study focused exclusively on students' perceptions and did not examine whether these positive perceptions translated into measurable improvements in English vocabulary achievement or language proficiency.

Future research is encouraged to employ experimental or mixed-methods approaches to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions and actual learning outcomes. Studies involving larger and more diverse samples from different educational settings would strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Further research may also compare the effectiveness of the Word Search Puzzle Game with other game-based learning strategies or digital educational applications to identify the instructional characteristics that most effectively promote vocabulary development, motivation, and student engagement.

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