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Students' Perceptions of Game-Based Learning Models in Physical Education: A Descriptive Qualitative Study

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ABSTRAK

Physical education learning plays a crucial role in developing students' physical, social, emotional, and motivational aspects, yet its implementation often faces challenges of low engagement and interest in learning. Game-based learning models are viewed as an innovative alternative capable of creating more enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences for students. This study aims to describe students' perceptions of the application of game-based learning models in physical education. The approach used was qualitative with a descriptive research type, which places students as the main subjects of the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, then analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that students interpreted game-based learning as a fun, safe learning experience that encouraged social interaction. This learning model was able to increase intrinsic motivation and active participation in learning activities. In addition, students assessed that game-based learning was relevant to their characteristics and had the potential to be implemented sustainably by considering the variety of activities and fairness of implementation. Student perceptions proved to be an important indicator in assessing the effectiveness and meaningfulness of game-based physical education learning. The findings of this study are expected to form the basis for developing learning strategies that are more centered on student learning experiences

INTRODUCTION

Education is viewed as a strategic process in developing quality human resources capable of adapting to social dynamics and developments. The learning process in schools is not only oriented towards academic achievement but also towards the balanced development of students' physical, emotional, and social potential. Monotonous learning approaches have the potential to reduce students' interest in learning and active engagement in learning activities (Zabidi et al., 2023; Niam et al., 2025). This situation encourages the need for innovative learning models that can create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Learning innovation becomes increasingly relevant when linked to the characteristics of students who have diverse learning needs. The success of the educational process is greatly influenced by the match between the learning

model and student characteristics. This match plays a crucial role in building motivation and active participation during the learning process. Efforts to improve the quality of learning require a comprehensive understanding of the approaches used in the classroom.

Physical education is a subject with unique characteristics because it emphasizes physical activity as a learning tool. The goals of physical education include developing students' physical fitness, motor skills, sportsmanship, and social skills (Zabidi et al., 2024). The physical education learning process often faces challenges in the form of low student engagement in the activities provided. A less varied learning pattern can cause students to feel bored and less motivated to participate optimally. This condition results in the failure to achieve optimal learning objectives. A pleasant learning environment is a crucial factor in increasing student participation in physical education. Learning approaches that are relevant to students' lives are seen as capable of increasing enthusiasm and engagement in learning. The need for more contextual learning models is a significant concern in the development of physical education (Bafadhal, 2023).

Game-based learning models have emerged as an alternative that is considered relevant to student characteristics. Game elements enable social interaction, cooperation, and healthy competition, all of which support the learning process. Play activities provide students with a space to learn without excessive pressure. Enjoyable learning experiences have the potential to increase students' intrinsic motivation in physical education lessons. Game-based models also encourage students to be actively involved, both physically and mentally. The application of games in learning can help students understand movement concepts more naturally. The diversity of game formats allows for adaptation to students' abilities and needs. This flexibility has led to the increasing use of game-based learning models in physical education.

The success of implementing a learning model is not solely determined by teacher planning and implementation. Student responses to the learning model are a crucial indicator in assessing learning effectiveness. Student perceptions are shaped by the learning experiences they encounter during the learning process. Positive perceptions can increase student interest, engagement, and attitudes toward physical education. Negative perceptions can potentially hinder the achievement of learning objectives, even if the model is well-designed. Student perspectives provide a clear picture of how learning is received and interpreted. Understanding student perceptions helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learning model being implemented. This information provides a crucial basis for developing more effective learning strategies.

Students' perceptions of game-based learning vary from one individual to another. Background, learning experiences, interests, and physical abilities influence how students interpret learning. These differences in perception reflect the complexity of the learning experience in physical education classes. Quantitative approaches often fail to capture the depth of students' subjective experiences. A deeper understanding is needed to capture the meaning students experience during game-based learning. Students' subjective experiences provide a rich source of information for in-depth analysis. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore students' perspectives more comprehensively. The choice of research approach needs to be tailored to the goal of understanding the phenomenon in depth.

Descriptive qualitative studies are considered appropriate for describing students' perceptions truthfully based on their real-life experiences. This approach emphasizes understanding the meanings students construct during the learning process. Data obtained through interviews and observations provide a contextual picture of students' learning

experiences. In-depth descriptions enable researchers to understand how students respond to game-based learning models. Focusing on students' perspectives makes research findings more relevant to learning needs in the field. A descriptive approach helps uncover the dynamics of interactions between students and game activities. Qualitative research findings can complement previous quantitative research. The insights gained are expected to contribute to the development of physical education learning practices.

The implementation of game-based learning models requires continuous evaluation to ensure they align with physical education objectives. Evaluation should not only focus on learning outcomes but also on students' learning experiences. Student perceptions are an important indicator in assessing the meaningfulness of the learning implemented. Information regarding student perceptions can help teachers adjust learning strategies to be more effective. Adapting learning strategies has the potential to improve the quality of classroom learning interactions. Good learning quality supports the creation of a conducive learning environment. A positive learning environment encourages students to participate actively and sustainably. Improving the quality of physical education learning requires a strong empirical basis.

Based on these needs, research on students' perceptions of game-based learning models is relevant. This research aims to describe students' experiences and perspectives in depth. The focus of the research is on how students interpret game-based physical education learning. A descriptive qualitative approach allows for comprehensive disclosure of learning phenomena. The research results are expected to provide a concrete picture of the effectiveness of learning from the students' perspective. The research findings can serve as a reflection for teachers in designing learning. The research contribution is expected to support the development of more humanistic and contextual learning models. This study is a first step in strengthening physical education practices that are oriented towards student learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research, which aims to describe in depth students' perceptions of the application of game-based learning models in physical education. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand students' meanings, experiences, and subjective views based on their direct interactions with the learning process. This study places students as the primary subjects who provide information about their learning experiences. The focus of the study is directed at revealing students' perceptions naturally without variable manipulation. A descriptive approach is used to present learning phenomena as they occur in the field. This study does not aim to test hypotheses, but rather to gain a comprehensive contextual understanding. The results are expected to provide a factual picture of students' responses to game-based learning. This approach is considered relevant to the research objectives, which emphasize an in-depth understanding of educational phenomena.

The research subjects were students participating in physical education lessons using a game-based learning model at a specific educational institution. Subject selection was conducted purposively, taking into account students' active involvement in the lessons studied. Subject criteria included students who had participated in game-based learning on an ongoing basis. The number of subjects was adjusted to meet the need for data depth and the principle of information sufficiency. Variations in subject characteristics were considered to obtain diverse perspectives. The research environment

focused on real-life physical education learning situations. The natural learning conditions were a crucial part of data collection. This approach enabled researchers to obtain contextual and relevant data.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore students' perspectives, experiences, and feelings regarding game-based learning. Observations were conducted to observe student engagement, social interactions, and responses during learning activities. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of learning notes, activity photos, or relevant learning tools. The use of several data collection techniques aimed to improve the accuracy and completeness of the information. The data collection process was conducted systematically and continuously. The researcher acted as the primary instrument in data collection. The researcher's presence in the field was carried out while maintaining research ethics.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed by selecting information relevant to the research focus. The reduced data was presented in descriptive narrative form for ease of understanding. Data presentation was systematic so that emerging patterns and themes could be identified. Conclusions were drawn based on the interrelationships between the themes identified. The analysis process was carried out continuously from data collection until the research was completed. Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation. Triangulation was performed by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation.

The validity of the research was strengthened through credibility, dependability, and confirmability tests. Data credibility was maintained by extending the researcher's participation in the field and cross-checking information with the subjects. Dependability was achieved by recording the research process in detail. Confirmability was maintained by ensuring that the research findings were based on the data obtained. The entire research process was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles. Subjects' identities were kept confidential to protect student privacy. Consent was obtained prior to data collection. This research method is expected to produce a valid and in-depth picture of students' perceptions of game-based learning in physical education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Perceptions of Learning Experiences Through Game-Based Learning Models in Physical Education

Students' perceptions of the learning experience through game-based learning models in physical education indicate a shift in the meaning of learning from an instructive activity to a more participatory experience. Students' learning experiences are not only interpreted as curricular obligations, but also as activities that provide enjoyment and a sense of involvement. Game-based learning allows students to feel freer to express their motor skills. The relaxed learning situation creates an atmosphere more conducive to student emotional engagement. This positive perception is reflected in students' statements that the learning feels more lively and less boring. One student said,

> *"If you learn through games, it feels more relaxed and doesn't feel like you're being graded."*

This statement indicates that play experiences reduce psychological stress during learning. Enjoyable learning experiences contribute to the development of positive attitudes toward physical education subjects (Rejeki et al., 2024).

The meaning of the learning experience students construct is also related to their sense of security and comfort during learning activities. Students feel less anxious about making mistakes because the game provides space to try without fear of being judged. A supportive learning environment allows students to participate according to their individual abilities. This perception is reinforced by a student's statement,

> *"If you make a wrong move, you don't get scolded, instead you get asked to try it again."*

This situation indicates a change in the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students. More egalitarian interactions encourage students to be more actively involved in learning. This experience influences how students view physical education as a safe learning space. This perception forms a crucial foundation for continued student participation.

In addition to the emotional aspect, students also perceive game-based learning experiences as a means to strengthen social relationships. Game activities encourage cooperation and communication between students. Intensive social interaction provides a collective learning experience. Students stated that games help them get to know their classmates better. One student stated,

> *"Usually we rarely talk, but when we play we have to work together."*

This experience demonstrates that learning isn't solely focused on physical skills. The formation of social relationships is an integral part of the learning experience. This perception broadens the meaning of physical education as a social learning space.

The meaningfulness of learning experiences is also related to the relevance of game activities to students' needs and interests. Varied games provide opportunities for students to engage according to their individual preferences. Students perceive learning as more personalized and less uniform. This perception is reflected in student statements such as,

> *“The games are different, so everyone can join in.”*

The diversity of activities allows students with varying physical abilities to participate. This reduces the sense of exclusivity in learning. Inclusive learning experiences enhance a sense of ownership in the learning process. This perception demonstrates that game-based learning models are capable of accommodating student diversity.

Overall, students' perceptions of the game-based learning experience shaped a new understanding of physical education learning. Learning was no longer perceived as a tiring or monotonous activity. A fun, safe, and social experience fostered positive student attitudes. This positive perception strengthened students' emotional attachment to the subject. This attachment was a crucial factor in building long-term learning motivation. Meaningful learning experiences encouraged students to be more open to physical activity. Student perceptions served as an indicator of the successful

implementation of the learning model. These findings underscore the importance of considering students' subjective experiences in physical education learning.

The Influence of Game-Based Learning Models on Student Motivation and Participation in Physical Education Learning

Student motivation in physical education lessons has undergone significant changes through the implementation of a game-based learning model. Game activities provide intrinsic stimulation that encourages students to actively engage. Students no longer participate solely because of the demands of the task. The drive to play becomes the primary driver of student engagement. This perception is reflected in student statements that state,

"Once you've played, you'll want to keep playing until the end."

The motivation that emerges is internal and independent of teacher instruction. This indicates an increase in the quality of learning motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a crucial foundation in physical education learning.

Student participation in learning also increases through active involvement in games (Samosir & Aditya, 2022). Game activities require students to move, interact, and make decisions. This involvement creates a dynamic learning experience. Students feel a sense of ownership in the activities they undertake. One student stated,

"When we play, it feels like everyone has to participate so the team can progress."

This statement demonstrates collective responsibility. Student participation is not passive. Physical activity becomes an active and meaningful learning tool.

Student motivation is also influenced by the challenge elements present in the game. Challenges tailored to students' abilities create a sense of urgency. Students feel challenged without feeling pressured. This perception is reflected in a student's statement,

“The game is hard but fun, so I want to try again.”

Appropriate challenges boost students' self-confidence. Small successes in the game provide positive reinforcement. This reinforcement encourages students to continue participating. Motivation to learn develops gradually through successful experiences.

Student participation increased through the social interactions formed during the game. Cooperation and communication became integral parts of the learning activity. Students felt more engaged because the success of the game depended on their collective contributions. One student stated,

"If you don't join, your teammates could lose."

This statement demonstrates the presence of positive social pressure. This pressure encourages students to remain active. Participation isn't solely driven by teachers. The social environment is a driving factor in student engagement.

Overall, the game-based learning model significantly contributed to increasing student motivation and participation. Motivation to learn was no longer external and temporary. Student participation became more consistent throughout the learning process.

The playful experience created a lively learning dynamic. Student perceptions indicated that learning became more engaging. Active student engagement strengthened the effectiveness of physical education learning. High motivation and participation are indicators of a successful learning model. These findings confirm the relevance of game-based learning in physical education.

Students' Views on the Relevance and Sustainability of Implementing Game-Based Learning Models in Physical Education

Students' views on the relevance of implementing a game-based learning model showed positive acceptance. They assessed that the games suited their characteristics and needs. Game activities were perceived as relevant to the students' world, as they were closely connected to play. This perception was reflected in student statements such as,

“Learning is like playing, so it doesn't feel hard.”

This relevance increases students' engagement with learning. Learning becomes more contextual and meaningful. The alignment between activities and students' needs is a crucial factor (Mas'odi, 2024). This perspective strengthens the legitimacy of using game-based models.

The sustainability of the game-based learning model is also a concern for students. They expect a variety of games to prevent monotony. This expectation demonstrates students' cognitive engagement in the learning process. One student stated,

"If the games were changed, it would definitely be more exciting."

This statement demonstrates the need for continuous innovation. Students are not merely recipients of learning. Their perspectives reflect an awareness of the quality of learning. Student input serves as an important source of reflection for teachers.

Students' perceptions of a game's difficulty level also influence the sustainability of learning. Games that are too difficult can potentially diminish student interest. Conversely, games that are too easy reduce the learning challenge. Students expressed the need to adapt games to their abilities. One student stated,

"If it's too hard, you'll be lazy, but if it's right, you'll be enthusiastic."

This statement demonstrates the importance of balancing difficulty levels. Adapting activities is key to sustainable learning. Student perceptions guide the development of learning models.

The aspect of fairness in learning is also a concern for students. They believe that roles and opportunities should be distributed equally. This perception stems from their experience playing in groups. One student stated,

"If everyone gets a role, it will be fairer."

This statement demonstrates students' sensitivity to social justice. Sustainable learning is influenced by a sense of fairness. A fair learning environment enhances student acceptance. This perspective emphasizes the importance of inclusive classroom management.

Overall, student perspectives indicate that game-based learning models have the potential for sustainable implementation. The relevance of activities to student needs strengthens receptivity to learning. Student expectations regarding activity variation and adaptation provide direction for learning development. Student perceptions serve as a valuable source of empirical information. The sustainability of learning innovations depends on student responses. Learning models need to be continuously adapted to classroom dynamics. Student perspectives emphasize the importance of a learner-centered approach. These findings reinforce students' position as key actors in physical education learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the game-based learning model has a significant influence on how students interpret physical education learning. Student perceptions indicate that learning is no longer understood as a merely instructive routine activity. Enjoyable learning experiences shape students' positive attitudes toward physical activity. A sense of security and comfort during learning encourages students to participate without psychological pressure. Social interactions created through games strengthen students' emotional and social engagement. Students' learning motivation develops intrinsically through the challenges and successes experienced during the game. Active student participation increases along with group cooperation and responsibility. Student perceptions reflect that games are able to accommodate differences in learning abilities and interests. The relevance of game activities to student characteristics increases the meaningfulness of learning. Student views provide important input for the development of adaptive learning strategies. The sustainability of the game-based learning model depends on the variety of activities and fair classroom management. Overall, the findings confirm that student perceptions are an important indicator in assessing the effectiveness of game-based physical education learning.

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