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THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN CREATING A JOYFUL LEARNING ATMOSPHERE THROUGH INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES IN GRADE 2 OF MUHAMMADIYAH 1 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SURAKARTA

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to examine the role of teachers in fostering a joyful learning atmosphere through interactive activities among second-grade students at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School in Surakarta. A descriptive qualitative approach with case study design was employed. Data were gathered through interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and documentation of learning activities. The findings reveal that teachers play multiple pivotal roles: as designers of interactive learning experiences, facilitators of educational activities, supportive classroom managers, and motivators who provide positive reinforcement. These roles are manifested through educational games, group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, ice breakers, and the utilization of visual and concrete materials appropriate for lower-grade students. Implementation of these teacher roles enhances learning concentration, active participation, peer cooperation, motivation, and positive emotional engagement during the learning process. The study concludes that joyful learning through interactive activities effectively creates a conducive and meaningful learning environment while supporting cognitive, social, and emotional development of elementary school students.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental element inherent in human life. Without education, humans will experience obstacles in the process of personal development and the formation of their culture. In Indonesia, the education system is organized through three channels: formal, non-formal, and informal education. These three channels complement each other in supporting the overall development of individuals. One form of formal education that plays a vital role is Elementary School (SD). Education at the elementary level includes coaching, training, and learning activities for

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students aged 6–12 years. In the learning process, effective interaction between teachers and students is a crucial factor in ensuring students' active participation.

Student achievement is influenced by several main factors, including internal and external factors. Internal factors include the student's intelligence level, talent, interests, and motivation, while external factors include learning strategies, student engagement, and environmental conditions (Slameto, 2015). Teachers are educators who guide students and their communities in recognizing themselves as individuals, role models, and educators. A teacher must possess competencies derived from specific talents, and these competencies cannot be separated from other abilities. Shifts in learning methods toward more active and participatory learning are crucial in light of rapid advances, particularly in the world of information. Teachers cannot be considered the sole source of knowledge due to the rapid development of information. Students need to transform from being passive recipients of information to a more active role, while honing their skills in using information in more meaningful and understandable ways.

Student engagement in learning activities is a crucial element in determining the effectiveness of teaching and learning. However, contemporary elementary education faces a significant challenge: many students exhibit low engagement levels due to monotonous, teacher-centered instructional approaches that fail to accommodate diverse learning needs and developmental characteristics of young learners. This disengagement manifests in reduced attention spans, passive participation, and diminished motivation, ultimately hindering both academic achievement and holistic child development.

Despite growing recognition of interactive pedagogies' importance, there remains a substantial research gap concerning how teachers specifically orchestrate joyful learning environments in lower-grade elementary classrooms. While existing literature acknowledges the benefits of interactive methods, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the multifaceted roles teachers assume when implementing joyful learning approaches, particularly in Indonesian elementary school contexts. Furthermore, prior studies predominantly focus on learning outcomes rather than examining the intricate mechanisms through which teachers design, facilitate, and sustain engaging learning atmospheres that simultaneously address cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of child development.

The implementation of an interactive approach also strengthens students' emotional attachment to school and the overall learning experience. In an energetic and positive classroom atmosphere, students are more motivated to come to school, less anxious about lessons, and even more excited about upcoming learning activities. Interactive learning is a type of education that allows students to play an active role in the learning process through dialogue, group collaboration, the use of digital media, educational games, and project-based activities. This method is designed to encourage curiosity, strengthen emotional engagement, and create a fun classroom atmosphere that supports students' mental development (Diana & Nurhajati, 2022).

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates teacher roles in creating joyful learning atmospheres through interactive activities at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School, Surakarta. This research contributes theoretically by expanding understanding of how joyful learning principles materialize through specific teacher behaviors and pedagogical strategies in authentic classroom settings. Empirically, it provides documented evidence of effective practices that transform conventional instruction into dynamic, student-centered learning experiences. Practically, findings offer actionable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance elementary education quality through evidence-based approaches that prioritize both academic excellence and student well-being.

One approach that can be applied to develop student participation is joyful learning (Mahmudi et al., 2025). Joyful learning is a teaching method that emphasizes a fun, innovative, and interactive learning atmosphere. This method aims to provide learning-based experiences that can make students feel happy, more enthusiastic, comfortable, and motivated when participating in learning. With a cheerful atmosphere, students not only become more involved in learning activities but also more easily grasp and remember the material presented. The Joyful Learning approach uses a variety of engaging teaching tactics. These engaging tactics include the use of educational games, group

Sosioedukasi
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Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

discussions, experiments, interactive visual media, and experience-based activities that directly involve students. This approach also emphasizes the importance of creating a positive correlation between teachers and students, creating a conducive learning environment, and providing opportunities for students to express their ideas and creativity (Diputera et al., 2024).

While the implementation of Joyful Learning offers many benefits, it is also expected to face various challenges that must be overcome for this method to be implemented effectively. One of the biggest challenges is the readiness of educators to design engaging learning that is tailored to the characteristics of students. In many educational institutions, particularly in areas with limited resources, the necessary facilities to support dynamic and creative teaching are often unavailable. However, when successfully implemented with adequate teacher preparation and institutional support, joyful learning methods have demonstrated effectiveness in early grades by creating engaging atmospheres that align with young learners' natural inclination toward play and active movement, thereby capturing student attention through playful pedagogical elements.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach utilizing a case study design to examine teacher roles in fostering joyful learning atmospheres through interactive activities among second-grade students at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School, Surakarta. The qualitative paradigm was selected due to its capacity to capture nuanced pedagogical practices and participant experiences within authentic classroom contexts.

Participants comprised two second-grade classroom teachers and 24 students (aged 7-8 years) purposively selected based on their engagement with interactive learning activities. Purposive sampling ensured information-rich cases that illuminated the phenomenon under investigation. The research was conducted over a three-month period from September to November 2024, encompassing regular school sessions.

Data collection employed triangulation through three primary methods. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participating teachers to explore their understanding, planning, and implementation strategies for joyful learning. Each teacher participated in two 45-minute interview sessions using an interview protocol addressing pedagogical philosophies, activity design, classroom management, and perceived student responses. Second, non-participant classroom observations were undertaken across eight learning sessions, documenting teacher-student interactions, activity implementation, and student engagement patterns using structured observation sheets. Third, documentation analysis examined lesson plans, teaching materials, student work samples, and photographic evidence of classroom activities.

Interview transcripts and observation notes were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. Data were coded, categorized, and synthesized into emergent themes representing teacher roles and their manifestations in practice. Credibility was established through member checking, wherein preliminary findings were shared with participant teachers for validation. Transferability was enhanced through thick description of context, participants, and procedures. Dependability was maintained via comprehensive audit trails documenting analytical decisions throughout the research process.

Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from school administration, teachers, and student guardians, ensuring participant anonymity through pseudonyms, and guaranteeing voluntary participation with withdrawal rights. The study received ethical clearance from the institutional review board prior to data collection (Damayanti et al., 2025; Kusmawati et al., 2025).

Results and Discussion

Student Response to Joyful Learning

Sosioedukasi
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Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

The table below presents findings from direct observations of the teaching and learning process in Grade 2 of Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School, Surakarta. This observation aimed to assess student learning behavior when the teacher implemented joyful learning through interactive activities. The classroom environment observed demonstrated a highly active learning dynamic, with varying levels of student concentration, participation, and collaboration, consistent with the characteristics of children in the lower grades. The information contained in this table serves as a basis for analysis to describe the teacher's contribution to creating a joyful learning environment.

Table 1. Student Responses to Joyful Learning

Aspect	Indicator	Student Response
Student Learning Focus	Students can listen to the teacher's explanation while the learning process is taking place	Most students paid attention to the teacher's explanation, followed the activity instructions, and answered the questions posed. Some students experienced brief distractions, but they regained their focus after the teacher provided an icebreaker and used visual aids
Participation	Students enthusiastically answered questions, asked questions, and participated in activities. Many students showed a high level of interest in participating in learning activities	Students actively provided answers, participated in educational games, and contributed to group discussions. Their enthusiasm was evident in their bright facial expressions and engagement, both verbally and nonverbally
Student Cooperation	Students actively participate in group work, helping each other, and engaging in discussions. When the teacher assigns group assignments, students immediately gather and chat	Students collaborate with their group mates, assign simple roles, and help each other complete tasks. Social interaction is active with little teacher direction

Based on the information in Table 1, the learning concentration aspect of second-grade students increased significantly when the Joyful Learning method was applied. Students appeared more able to pay attention to teacher explanations, follow learning instructions, and show strong enthusiasm for the activities carried out. This increased concentration may be attributed to teachers' strategic use of visual media and icebreakers, which aligns with Piaget's concrete operational stage theory where 7-8-year-old children require tangible representations and engaging experiences to process abstract concepts effectively. The visual and interactive elements directly support the cognitive demands of this developmental stage, enabling students to transform passive listening into active engagement with learning content (Zheng, 2022). When children at this developmental level encounter concrete materials, visual representations, and hands-on activities, their brains activate multiple neural pathways simultaneously visual processing, tactile sensation, and motor engagement creating richer neural networks supporting deeper understanding and longer retention of learned concepts.

In terms of student engagement, Table 1 shows that students actively participated in various learning activities including answering questions, participating in educational games, and having small group discussions. These student activities emphasize that the learning process is now not teacher-centered but also provides means for students to actively participate in the process. This increased engagement occurs because interactive activities satisfy students'

Sosioedukasi
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Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness motivational factors that drive sustained engagement and learning persistence. When students experience choice in learning approaches, feel capable of succeeding with appropriate support, and develop positive relationships through group work, their motivation to participate increases substantially (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021). The autonomy experienced when students choose discussion partners, select game difficulty levels, or propose alternative solutions generates intrinsic motivation that proves far more powerful than external incentives. Students recognize themselves as decision-makers rather than passive instruction-followers, fundamentally shifting their orientation toward learning from compliance-based to engagement-based. This condition proves that a pleasant learning atmosphere can increase students' courage and motivation to participate.

Furthermore, in the area of collaboration between students, the results of Table 1 show that students can work well together in their groups, dividing tasks, discussing, and helping each other in completing learning activities. This collaboration demonstrates that learning through Joyful Learning affects not only the cognitive aspects of students but also provides support for their social development. This peer cooperation emerges because interactive group activities create contexts where students experience belonging, develop communication skills, and learn mutual support outcomes aligned with socio-cultural learning theory emphasizing collaborative knowledge construction. Additionally, such collaborative experiences reduce inappropriate student-teacher dependency, enabling development of student autonomy and independence (Roorda et al., 2021). When students work collaboratively toward shared learning goals, they negotiate meaning with peers, explain thinking processes, listen to alternative perspectives, and collectively problem-solve cognitive processes that strengthen understanding while simultaneously developing essential social competencies including perspective-taking, empathy, and conflict resolution. A pleasant learning environment allows for positive interactions between students and strengthens collaboration skills essential for future academic and professional success.

Student responses to the Joyful Learning method showed significant improvements in terms of concentration, engagement, and cooperation, which are directly influenced by the way teachers organize interactive and enjoyable learning processes. Teachers function as designers of learning experiences by designing varied activities such as educational games, group discussions, the use of visual materials, and icebreakers that help maintain student attention. In addition, teachers also act as facilitators and class organizers by providing space for active participation, creating a safe and comfortable learning environment, and providing positive feedback. This facilitative role, supported by autonomy-supportive leadership, encourages students to participate more actively, collaborate with their peers, and maintain their concentration throughout the learning process, creating classroom atmospheres that are more dynamic and supportive of student development (Collie, 2021). The teacher's consistent positive reinforcement praising effort rather than ability, celebrating attempts rather than only successes, and encouraging persistence through challenges builds students' growth mindsets and resilience essential for navigating academic challenges.

Implementation of Joyful Learning by Grade II Teachers through Interactive Activities

The table below displays the results of interviews conducted with second-grade teachers at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School, Surakarta. The purpose of these interviews was to gather detailed information regarding teachers' knowledge, objectives, and approaches to implementing joyful learning, as well as its impact on student participation and development.

Table 2. Implementation of Joyful Learning by Second-Grade Teachers Through Interactive Activities

Aspect	Interview Quotes	Meaning of Findings	Scientific Interpretation

Sosioedukasi
JURNAL ILMIAH ILMU PENDIDIKAN DAN SOSIAL
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Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

Understanding the Concept of Joyful Learning	"Joyful learning is learning that makes children happy, comfortable, and not afraid of the lesson. This encourages them to get involved"	The teacher recognized that Joyful Learning prioritizes positive emotions as the basis for student engagement. She linked a comfortable atmosphere with increased courage and interest in learning	Teachers' understanding reflects awareness that positive learning environments increase student participation and motivation (Purwanti et al., 2025; Zheng, 2022)
The Purpose of Implementing Joyful Learning	"So that children are active, dare to speak, and understand the material more quickly"	The teacher linked Joyful Learning to three main goals: activeness, courage, and understanding—demonstrating focus on both pleasant atmosphere and academic aspects	Teacher goals reflect student-centered learning orientation targeting increased interest, enthusiasm, motivation, and understanding (Aftalina et al., 2024; Azkiya & Istiqomah, 2024)
Implementation of Interactive Activities	"I often use guessing games, group competitions, or cards to keep them motivated"	Play activities encourage healthy competition, curiosity, and emotional engagement. Games function not just for fun but as means of understanding concepts—strategies to maintain student energy and motivation	Implementation demonstrates learning emphasizes direct student experiences; interactive approaches increase active student engagement and participation (Donasari et al., 2023; Kusmana & Putri, 2025)
Use of Learning Media in Joyful Learning	"I use visual media like picture cards, short videos, and concrete props because second-grade students understand better through direct observation. These media encourage them, keep them from getting bored quickly, and encourage them to	Teachers' choice of media serves not only as learning support but also increases students' motivation, engagement, and visual comprehension. Visual and concrete media suit early childhood students in concrete thinking phase, making abstract concept understanding easier	The selection of visual and concrete media directly operationalizes Piagetian developmental principles, providing tangible representations that second-graders require for cognitive development. Research supports that visual creative media combined with Joyful Learning develops

Sosioedukasi
JURNAL ILMIAH ILMU PENDIDIKAN DAN SOSIAL
ISSN: 2086-6135 E-ISSN: 2541-612x
Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

	try. When I use engaging media, the class becomes more lively, and students are eager to participate"		student motivation and engagement (Purwanti et al., 2025)
Impact on Student Learning Attitudes	"The children are much more courageous, active, and willing to try after I implemented Joyful Learning. They seem happier learning and less bored"	Joyful Learning makes students more confident, actively involved, and enthusiastic. This approach creates positive emotional atmosphere, improving student readiness to learn and willingness to attempt challenging tasks	Positive emotional engagement indicates that joyful learning impacts affective domain; students experience learning as meaningful and enjoyable rather than burdensome (Romano et al., 2021; Timm & Barth, 2021)

Based on data from interviews conducted with teachers at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School in Surakarta, the application of the Joyful Learning approach in elementary school learning activities shows that fun activities can effectively increase student participation and engagement. The teachers' intentional design of interactive activities reflects pedagogical content knowledge the specialized understanding combining subject expertise with knowledge of age-appropriate pedagogy (Grammens et al., 2022). The implementation of varied teaching strategies, creative media use, and game-based activities demonstrates sophisticated understanding of how second-grade students learn optimally. Teachers invest considerable time planning activities that align content objectives with age-appropriate engagement strategies, selecting materials that capture student interest while supporting learning goals, and designing scaffolding that enables student success.

Teachers function as multi-role professionals when implementing Joyful Learning—simultaneously serving as activity designers, instructional facilitators, emotional supporters, and classroom managers. Research findings indicate that teacher competence across multiple domains instructional, managerial, technical, communicational, and social significantly influences learning outcomes (Grammens et al., 2022). In this study, teachers demonstrated these competencies through intentional design of engaging activities, responsive facilitation of student learning, creation of supportive classroom environments, and consistent positive reinforcement of student efforts. The instructional competency enables teachers to translate curriculum standards into student-centered activities; managerial competency allows establishment of productive classroom routines supporting interactive learning; communicational competency facilitates clear explanation of task expectations and responsive feedback; and social competency creates emotionally safe relationships enabling vulnerability and risk-taking essential for learning growth.

The teachers' understanding of Joyful Learning demonstrates alignment with contemporary educational theories emphasizing student-centered, emotionally supportive, developmentally responsive instruction. Rather than viewing joyful learning as entertainment added to instruction, teachers conceptualized it as foundational to effective learning recognizing that emotional engagement, psychological safety, and intrinsic motivation create optimal conditions for cognitive development. This sophisticated understanding contrasts with superficial implementations treating joyful learning as occasional fun activities disconnected from content learning. The teachers' emphasis on

Sosioedukasi
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Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

three objectives student activeness, courage to participate, and material comprehension reflects integrated understanding that cognitive and affective development proceed together rather than as separate dimensions.

Student Responses to Joyful Learning through Interactive Activities

The table below presents the results of an interview with a second-grade student at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School, Surakarta. This interview was conducted to obtain more comprehensive information regarding student perceptions of joyful learning and its impact on their learning experiences and development.

Table 3. Student Responses to Joyful Learning Through Interactive Activities

Aspect	Interview Quotes	Meaning of Findings	Scientific Interpretation
Student Perceptions of Joyful Learning	"I like learning while playing or using pictures. Watching videos makes me understand faster. Learning feels like a game, not a tiring experience. If I just sit there listening to explanations, I get bored quickly"	Students view Joyful Learning as ideal because it provides engaging, varied experiences preventing boredom. Feedback suggests traditional passive methods are less effective for elementary students; emotional and sensory engagement crucial for their understanding	High student interest demonstrates successful creation of fun learning environment aligning with elementary student characteristics. The involvement in play, visual activities, and social interaction increases student interest (Roorda et al., 2021; Wiyanti et al., 2025)
Student Motivation and Enthusiasm	"If learning is fun, I'm excited to go to school. If I know there's a game or singing class today, I can't wait to go to class. If I'm bored, I get sleepy and don't want to listen"	Joyful Learning significantly increases students' motivation to learn. Enthusiasm arises from activities providing opportunities to move, play, and express themselves. This motivation is intrinsic, growing from enjoyable experiences, influencing attendance, concentration, and persistence	High student enthusiasm indicates positive emotional engagement; joyful learning enables students to experience learning as fun activity, not burden. This intrinsic motivation supports sustained learning commitment and academic persistence (Demir, 2021)
Student Academic Understanding	"After playing, the teacher asked us to write a new word. I remembered the word and was able to write it in my book"	Interactive activities linked to written reflections strengthen understanding of material. Students' increased comprehension indicates joyful learning impacts	Students' improved understanding demonstrates that fun-based learning helps grasp and retain concepts longer in memory, supporting cognitive development (Kusmana

Sosioedukasi
JURNAL ILMIAH ILMU PENDIDIKAN DAN SOSIAL
ISSN: 2086-6135 E-ISSN: 2541-612x
Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

		cognitive domain beyond affective engagement	& Putri, 2025; Salamah et al., 2021)
Social Skill Development	"When I play guessing games or study in groups, I can collaborate with my friends. I become more familiar with them and feel more confident speaking up. I'm no longer shy when it comes to discussions"	Joyful Learning improves students' social skills, particularly communication, cooperation, and interaction courage. Group activities and informal discussions help students learn to support each other and understand peer differences	Increased cooperation and social interaction demonstrates that Joyful Learning promotes healthy collaborative learning; group activities in fun atmosphere help students develop communication, cooperation, and mutual respect. These social competencies support emotional development and interpersonal relationships essential for holistic child development (Zheng, 2022)

Student responses to the Joyful Learning method indicate that they find learning more engaging, interactive, and less boring than traditional methods. Activities such as games, visual worksheets, and interactive discussions successfully capture students' attention, making them actively engaged in learning processes. The contrast students articulated between joyful learning and passive listening reveals their intuitive understanding of learning effectiveness recognizing that multisensory engagement, emotional positivity, and active participation create superior learning experiences compared to transmission models where students serve as passive recipients of information. This finding aligns with research demonstrating that students tend to respond well to fun and interactive learning activities (Wiyanti et al., 2025).

Motivation in learning is a crucial factor in evaluating Joyful Learning implementation success. Based on Table 3 information, the majority of students showed increased enthusiasm for learning after interactive methods were implemented. This enthusiasm reflects intrinsic motivation an internal drive emerging from learning experiences themselves rather than external rewards or pressures. Students' increased willingness to attend school, eagerness to participate in class, and persistence through challenging tasks exemplify how joyful learning environments nurture positive motivation (Azkiya & Istiqomah, 2024). The phenomenon of students anticipating learning with excitement "I can't wait to go to class" represents transformation of school attendance from obligation into valued experience, with substantial implications for educational engagement and long-term learning orientation.

In addition to affective factors, students' responses to Joyful Learning are evident in their improved cognitive abilities. Students who learn using this method tend to demonstrate more optimal levels of material understanding and more meaningful engagement in learning processes. This cognitive improvement may occur because interactive, game-based activities encode learning content into memory through multiple modalities—visual, auditory, kinesthetic thereby increasing retention and understanding depth. The student's recollection of the new word after playing games and subsequent successful writing demonstrates how joyful learning activities create memorable learning experiences that students can retrieve and apply in new contexts. Furthermore, when students experience success in joyful learning

Sosioedukasi
JURNAL ILMIAH ILMU PENDIDIKAN DAN SOSIAL
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Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

contexts, they develop academic resilience and confidence in their learning capabilities, supporting future academic persistence (Romano et al., 2021). Beyond immediate memory improvement, joyful learning builds confidence in learning ability, reducing anxiety associated with academic tasks and increasing willingness to attempt challenging material.

The student's reflection on reduced shyness and increased discussion participation demonstrates that Joyful Learning facilitates social-emotional development alongside cognitive growth. By creating psychologically safe environments where risk-taking is encouraged and mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, joyful learning enables students to develop communication confidence, interpersonal skills, and sense of belonging essential for healthy social-emotional development. Students who previously experienced anxiety about speaking publicly or contributing ideas develop courage and self-efficacy through repeated positive experiences in supportive group contexts. The comprehensive student responses indicate that Joyful Learning impacts not only immediate engagement but also develops fundamental competencies essential for lifelong learning—motivation, cooperation, communication, and academic confidence. These outcomes support student development across cognitive, social, and emotional domains simultaneously, reflecting what educators increasingly recognize as essential comprehensive, high-quality elementary education (Bellibaş et al., 2021). The positive student responses demonstrate that teachers' intentional implementation of joyful learning through interactive activities creates meaningful learning experiences where academic learning integrates seamlessly with social-emotional development.

Synthesis of Findings: Integrating Teacher Roles with Student Outcomes

The triangulated findings from observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews reveal that joyful learning implementation represents a coherent system wherein teacher roles directly generate the student engagement and learning outcomes documented in findings. When teachers function as sophisticated designers creating developmentally responsive activities, students encounter material in formats matching their cognitive capabilities. When teachers facilitate rather than dictate, students experience autonomy supporting intrinsic motivation. When teachers create emotionally safe environments, students develop courage to participate and take academic risks. When teachers provide positive reinforcement, students develop academic resilience and growth mindsets. This systematic alignment explains why joyful learning proves effective—it creates alignment between pedagogical approaches, student developmental needs, and fundamental conditions for learning engagement.

The findings also demonstrate that joyful learning's effectiveness operates through multiple mechanisms simultaneously. At the cognitive level, interactive activities provide concrete experiences supporting abstract concept understanding in developmentally appropriate ways. At the motivational level, joyful activities satisfy autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs driving intrinsic motivation. At the emotional level, positive classroom atmospheres reduce anxiety and build confidence. At the social level, collaborative activities develop interpersonal skills and sense of belonging. This multifaceted impact explains why research consistently documents benefits of joyful learning across cognitive, affective, social, and behavioral domains.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the multifaceted roles teachers enact when creating joyful learning atmospheres through interactive activities in second-grade classrooms at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School, Surakarta. Through triangulated data collection involving classroom observations, structured teacher interviews, and student interviews, the research documented how teachers simultaneously function as designers of interactive experiences, facilitators of learning processes, supportive classroom managers, and motivators providing positive reinforcement. These interconnected roles manifest through strategic implementation of educational games, structured group discussions, ice-breaker activities, and deliberate selection of visual and concrete learning materials aligned with the cognitive

Sosioedukasi
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Volume 15 No. 1. Maret 2026 https://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/sosioedukasi/index

developmental stage of seven-to-eight-year-old children. The findings substantiate that joyful learning through interactive activities creates measurable improvements across multiple student outcome dimensions. Student learning concentration increased significantly, with most students demonstrating sustained attention to instructional content following implementation of engaging activities and visual supports. Student participation expanded considerably, evidenced by increased rates of voluntary question-answering, active engagement in educational games, and meaningful contributions to group discussions. Peer cooperation strengthened markedly, with students demonstrating collaborative skills including task division, mutual support, and constructive discussion without excessive teacher direction. Beyond behavioral engagement, students reported increased intrinsic motivation, describing anticipation about attending school and enthusiasm for learning activities contrasting sharply with passive listening experiences they characterized as boring and soporific.

Critical to understanding joyful learning's effectiveness is recognition that improved student outcomes result from systematic alignment of pedagogical practices with developmental theory and motivational psychology. Teachers' strategic use of concrete materials operationalizes Piagetian developmental principles requiring tangible representations for cognitive processing at the concrete operational stage. Interactive activity structures satisfying student needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness generate intrinsic motivation far more powerful than external incentives. Emotionally supportive, psychologically safe classroom environments enable academic risk-taking and persistence through challenges essential for learning growth. This multi-mechanism operation explains why joyful learning proves effective: it addresses cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social dimensions of learning simultaneously rather than focusing narrowly on content transmission. However, important limitations constrain generalization of these findings. This study examined implementation at a single school, potentially limiting transferability to Indonesian elementary contexts with different resource availability, administrative support structures, or teacher preparation backgrounds. The three-month duration enabled documentation of implementation initiation and initial outcomes but could not capture long-term sustainability, implementation evolution, or how effectiveness might change over extended classroom application. Future research should address these limitations through expanded investigation. Longitudinal studies tracking joyful learning implementation across academic years would document sustainability and evolution of practice as teachers gain experience and refine instructional strategies. Multi-site studies across diverse Indonesian elementary schools would strengthen evidence regarding transferability and identify contextual factors facilitating or constraining successful implementation. Mixed-methods research combining qualitative observation and interviews with quantitative achievement data would clarify relationships between engagement improvements and measurable learning outcomes. Investigation of how joyful learning implementation varies across content areas mathematics, language arts, science, social studies would illuminate whether findings generalize across curricula or whether subject-specific modifications enhance effectiveness.

For practitioners and policymakers, these findings support several actionable recommendations. Elementary schools should prioritize professional development enabling teachers to develop pedagogical content knowledge necessary for designing developmentally responsive, interactive activities. Schools should allocate resources supporting interactive pedagogy visual materials, concrete manipulatives, flexible classroom furniture enabling group configurations recognizing that infrastructure investments enable pedagogical innovation. Teacher evaluation systems should recognize and reward sophisticated teaching practices involving multiple roles rather than narrow focus on content coverage or standardized test performance. Teacher preparation programs should emphasize not only content knowledge but explicitly develop competencies across instructional, managerial, communicational, and social domains essential for joyful learning implementation. Educational policy should protect instructional time for interactive activities rather than pressuring schools toward excessive standardized testing that constrains innovative pedagogy. In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that joyful learning through interactive activities represents a theoretically sound, practically effective approach to creating engaging, meaningful learning

environments supporting comprehensive student development. Teachers skilled in designing and facilitating interactive activities, combined with supportive school contexts providing necessary resources and autonomy, create classroom communities where academic learning integrates seamlessly with social-emotional development. While limitations constrain generalization, findings suggest substantial potential for joyful learning to improve elementary education quality through approaches honoring children's developmental characteristics, psychological needs, and intrinsic motivations. Future research, teacher preparation, and educational policy attention to joyful learning implementation could significantly enhance elementary school effectiveness and student well-being.

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