Fun Learning Innovation as an Effective Strategy in Increasing Students' Learning Engagement in Non-formal Education

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the fun learning strategy in enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement within non-formal education settings, particularly tutoring centers. A quantitative approach was employed using a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design. The research subjects consisted of 25 elementary school students enrolled in a local tutoring program. Data were collected through pretest and posttest assessments, learning motivation questionnaires, student engagement observation sheets, and supporting interviews. The results showed a significant increase in students' average scores from pretest (55.4) to posttest (78.4), alongside a rise in learning motivation scores from 3.18 to 4.5. Student engagement during the learning process was also notably high, with an average observation score of 4.55 out of 5. These findings support previous literature and demonstrate that fun learning is an effective instructional strategy in non-formal educational contexts. The study concludes that fun learning can serve as a relevant and applicable pedagogical approach to improve learning quality in tutoring institutions. It also contributes to the development of active and enjoyable learning models beyond the formal school environment.

Keywords: fun learning, tutoring center, student engagement, academic achievement, non-formal education.

INTRODUCTION

Non-formal education such as tutoring institutions plays an increasingly vital role in supporting the success of the educational process, especially amidst the complexity of the curriculum and current learning challenges. In the local context, many students rely on tutoring as an alternative or complement to learning in formal schools. Unfortunately, the learning approach applied in these non-formal institutions is still often conventional and teacher-centered, resulting in boredom and decreased student learning motivation. This challenge can be answered through the fun learning strategy which is present as a very promising innovation that can create a fun, effective, and adaptive learning experience to student needs. Prastika et al. (2022) showed that the implementation of the Fun Learning Course application in the context of tutoring can increase student activity and independence. Likewise, Budianto et al. (2024) noted that fun learning-based tutoring in Kampung Nelayan Tangguh was able to help students who have limited access to education, strengthening the social function of non-formal educational institutions. Therefore, it is important to explore more deeply how the fun learning strategy can be optimally implemented in tutoring institutions, especially in local areas that have diverse social and economic conditions.

The urgency of implementing fun learning strategies in tutoring institutions is also driven by the need to create a learning atmosphere that is not only fun, but also effective in improving learning outcomes. Suhari and Sobri (2025) revealed that the make learning fun strategy used by Kampus Mengajar students has been proven to create innovative classes that increase student participation and motivation. This shows that innovation in learning approaches is very likely to be applied not only in schools but also in non-formal institutions. Yuniawatika et al. (2023) proved that educational games such as snakes and ladders in English learning can significantly increase the involvement of elementary school students. If applied in tutoring, a similar method has the potential to help students understand the subject matter in a lighter but still meaningful way. In addition, a study by Pangestu et al. (2022) in Bimba Aiueo shows that consistent fun learning can build positive learning habits from an early

age, something that is also very relevant to tutoring institutions in both urban and rural areas.

This research is important because tutoring institutions have unique characteristics: they are not bound by a rigid formal curriculum structure, and have flexibility in time and teaching methods. Therefore, an adaptive and experience-based fun learning approach can be optimized to increase the appeal and success of the learning process. Susetyo et al. (2023) showed that teachers who were provided with fun learning training were able to develop more creative and contextual learning strategies. This shows that the key to the success of implementing fun learning in tutoring institutions lies in the readiness of the teaching staff to change the teaching pattern to be more participatory and enjoyable. Asmawadi (2021) also proved that simple media such as WhatsApp can be utilized in distance learning with a fun learning approach, especially in areas with limited infrastructure. This finding emphasizes that the fun learning strategy does not always require high technology, but rather creativity in managing media and methods that are in accordance with the character of the students.

The purpose of this study is to identify, develop, and evaluate fun learning strategies in the context of non-formal educational institutions, especially tutoring in local areas. This objective includes two important aspects: first, designing a form of learning that is fun and relevant to students' needs; second, evaluating its impact on students' learning engagement and academic outcomes. This study also attempts to adapt the fun learning strategy to the social, economic, and cultural realities of students who take tutoring. Pradana (2022) noted that the introduction of the fun learning method in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah was able to significantly increase students' interest in learning, especially after the pandemic. Meanwhile, Ika et al. (2023) showed that fun learning can also be adapted for inclusive education, proving the flexibility of this approach in various contexts. Adapting the strategy to the character of students and the learning environment is an important foundation in designing an approach that is not only fun but also has a positive impact on learning achievement.

In terms of literature, the fun learning strategy has been widely discussed in the context of formal learning, but few have highlighted its application in non-formal educational institutions such as tutoring. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature, as well as strengthen empirical evidence on the effectiveness of fun learning in a more flexible and diverse context. Chusna (2023) showed that the fun learning approach has a significant impact on student learning outcomes in Civic Education material, while Syarif et al. (2022) emphasized the success of the joyful learning model in improving science learning outcomes. Meanwhile, Widiadnya and Purnami (2024) noted the success of the Fun English program in the social community of orphans, showing that the fun approach is not only academically relevant but also emotionally. Thus, this study is expected to provide new contributions to the development of effective learning models in non-formal educational institutions.

Based on these various findings, the problem formulation that is the focus of this research is as follows:

1. What form of fun learning strategy is appropriate and effective to implement in tutoring institutions in the local environment?
2. How does the implementation of fun learning strategies affect student motivation, involvement, and learning outcomes in tutoring institutions?
3. What are the challenges faced by tutoring managers and teachers in implementing the fun learning strategy, and what are the strategic solutions?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental research design of one group pretest-posttest design to measure the effectiveness of the fun learning strategy in improving student engagement and learning

outcomes at a tutoring institution. The study was conducted at a non-formal tutoring institution in a local area with diverse student characteristics in terms of social background and academic ability. The subjects of the study consisted of 25 elementary school students in grades IV and V who actively participated in additional learning activities at the institution for at least two consecutive months. The sample selection was carried out by purposive sampling by considering the active involvement of students in tutoring activities and their willingness to participate in the entire series of learning interventions. The instruments used in this study included student engagement observation sheets, learning motivation questionnaires, and learning outcome evaluation questions developed based on competency achievement indicators according to the curriculum applicable at the tutoring institution. The data collection procedure began with a pretest to measure students' initial knowledge, followed by the application of the fun learning strategy for six meetings, where the methods used included educational games based on subject matter, active discussions, and the use of interactive media as conducted by Yuniawatika et al. (2023), Suhari and Sobri (2025), and Prastika et al. (2022). During the implementation of learning, student engagement was observed directly through observation sheets by two observers. After all intervention sessions were completed, a posttest was given to measure improvements in learning outcomes, and a learning motivation questionnaire was filled out by students. Analyze the data obtained using descriptive statistical techniques and paired t-tests to produce the significance of differences in pretest and posttest scores. This procedure refers to the approach used by Alwahidi et al. (2021) and Pradana (2022), who also implemented fun learning interventions in non-formal education and compared the results before and after treatment to measure the effectiveness of learning strategies.

RESEARCH RESULT

This study was conducted on 25 elementary school students who actively participated in tutoring activities at local non-formal institutions. Data were obtained through three main instruments: pretest-posttest questions to measure learning outcomes, student engagement observation sheets, and learning motivation questionnaires. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with several students and teachers to support quantitative data. The following is a systematic presentation of the results.

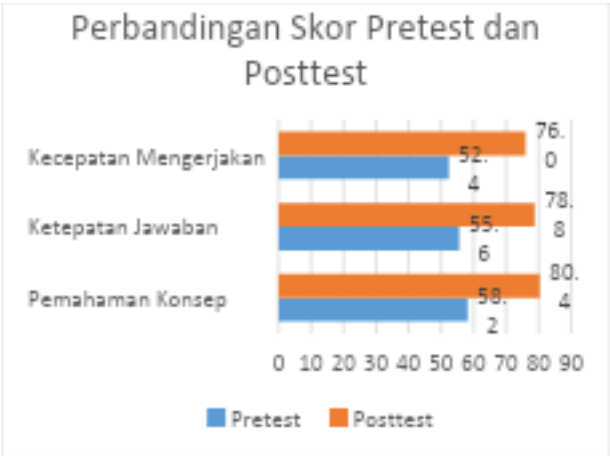
A. Pretest and Posttest Results

Evaluation of learning outcomes is carried out by measuring pretest and posttest scores which reflect students' understanding of the material taught using the fun learning approach.

Table 1. Average Pretest and Posttest Scores

No	Indicator	Pretest (Mean)	Posttest (Mean)	Difference
1	Concept understanding	58,2	80,4	+22,2
2	Accuracy of answers	55,6	78,8	+23,2
3	Speed of work	52,4	76,0	+23,6
	Total rate-rate	**55,4**	**78,4**	**+23,0**

Graph 1. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores



The results showed an average increase of 23 points after students participated in learning with the fun learning strategy. As many as 92% of

students showed an increase in individual scores from pretest to posttest. Only two students (8%) increased by less than 10 points.

Interview Excerpt:

"At first I was a bit confused during the first material, but after being taught using games, it became easier to remember. So when it was time for the exam, I was also quicker to do it." – (Student A, grade V)

"If I study like usual, I often get bored, but with this I actually look forward to the study schedule because it's fun." – (Student B, grade IV)

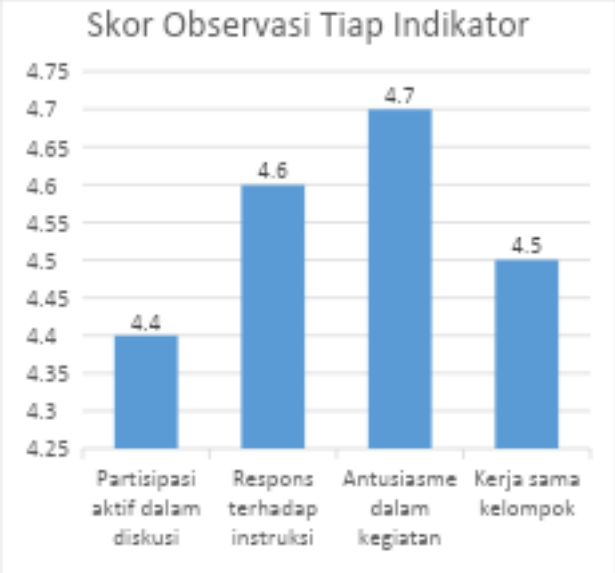
B. Student Engagement During Learning

Student engagement is observed through observation sheets with indicators such as active participation, response to instructions, cooperation in groups, and enthusiasm for participating in educational games.

Table 2. Average Student Engagement Observation Score (Scale 1–5)

No	Engagement Indicators	Rate-rate
1	Active participation in discussions	4,4
2	Response to instructions	4,6
3	Enthusiasm in activities	4,7
4	Group work	4,5
	Total rate-rate	**4,55**

Graph 2. Average Observation Score for Each Indicator



Of the total 25 students, 21 students (84%) consistently showed high engagement (score > 4) throughout the learning sessions. The rest (16%) showed increased engagement in the 4th and 5th sessions after adjustments to the group activity approach.

Interview Excerpt:

"Children who are usually quiet, now become enthusiastic in answering. Because the atmosphere is different, they also become brave enough to speak." – (Tutor A, Indonesian language teacher)

"They have become more compact. Previously, when asked to work in groups, not everyone wanted to. Now, they are fighting to go forward to the present." – (Tutor B, Mathematics teacher)

3. Student Learning Motivation

Student motivation was measured before and after the intervention through a questionnaire covering four aspects: curiosity, persistence, enthusiasm, and feelings of pleasure during learning.

Table 3. Results of the Learning Motivation Questionnaire (Scale 1–5)

No	Motivational Aspects	Before (Mean)	After (Mean)	Difference
1	Curiosity	3,2	4,4	+1,2
2	Perseverance in learning	3,1	4,3	+1,2
3	Enthusiasm to participate in activities	3,0	4,6	+1,6
4	The feeling of joy while learning	3,4	4,7	+1,3
	Total rate	**3,18**	**4,5**	**+1,32**

Diagram 1. Learning Motivation Score Before and After

As many as 88% of students stated that they felt happier and more motivated to follow tutoring after the fun learning method was implemented. This change was most prominent in the aspect of students' enthusiasm and perseverance in completing assignments.

Interview Excerpt:

"I used to pretend to be sick during class, but now I remind my mom not to be late." – (Student C, grade IV)

"I like the way of learning now, there are games and challenges. So I want to keep learning so I can win in the group." – (Student D, grade V)

"This method is very effective. Children who initially tend to be lazy can change in just the first two weeks." – (Tutor C, science teacher)

4. Participant Attendance and Consistency

During six meetings in learning, the level of student attendance was relatively high. From a total of 150 attendance sessions (25 students × 6 meetings), there were only 4 absences.

Table 4. Student Attendance Level

Information	**Number of Attendance**	**Presentation**
Full attendance	21 students	84%
Absent 1 time	3 students	12%
Absent >1 time	1 student	4%

Interview Excerpt:

"Usually, we have a hard time maintaining attendance on Fridays, but since using this new method, the children have actually come earlier." – (LBB Coordinator)

"The children said they were afraid of missing the game, so they were more disciplined in coming." – (Tutor D, thematic teacher)

DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the implementation of fun learning strategies in non-formal educational institutions, especially tutoring, has a significant impact on improving student learning outcomes, engagement, and motivation. This finding is in line with and strengthens various previous research results in the references used, especially in the context of innovation in fun learning methods and their application in various levels of education and social conditions.

One of the main aspects that supports the effectiveness of fun learning is its contextual, participatory, and adaptive nature. This strategy shifts the learning approach from being instructional to being activity-based and interactive. As found by Suhari and Sobri (2025), make learning fun implemented by Kampus Mengajar students creates an innovative class that makes students active subjects in learning. Something similar happened in this study, where students were not only more active, but also showed a change in attitude towards the learning process—from mere obligation to a fun experience. This shows that fun learning is not just entertainment, but is a strategy based on active pedagogy.

This study also supports and extends the results of Yuniawatika et al. (2023), which emphasizes that the use of game media such as snakes and ladders in English learning significantly increases students' understanding and interest. In the context of more flexible tutoring, educational games and group quizzes used in this study provide similar results, indicating that a fun approach can be applied adaptively even in conditions of minimal facilities. An important contribution of this study is that the media used does not have to be sophisticated; rather, it must be contextual and easy for students to understand. This is in line with the findings of Asmawadi (2021), which

proves the effectiveness of simple media such as WhatsApp in supporting fun learning during distance learning.

In terms of motivation, this study showed a significant increase in aspects of enthusiasm, perseverance, and feelings of joy while learning, with an average score jumping from 3.18 to 4.5. These results are in line and agree with the results of Prastika et al. (2022) who examined the effectiveness of the Fun Learning Course in increasing students' independence and learning motivation. In the context of tutoring, where students often feel bored due to the additional burden of school, creating a fun atmosphere is a strategic solution. Tutors in this study noted significant changes in student attitudes, such as more disciplined attendance and increased self-confidence. This shows that fun learning is able to touch the affective dimension of students, which is very important in the educational process, as also emphasized by Pangestu et al. (2022) in the context of learning at Bimba Aiueo. More broadly, this study also supports an inclusive approach in non-formal education. Ika et al. (2023) in their research at Bimba Rainbow Kids Cisauk showed that the fun learning strategy can also be adapted to children with special needs. This is in line with the spirit of inclusive fun learning and does not discriminate against students' abilities. Although the subjects in this study were not inclusive groups, the findings on the active participation of all students, including those who were previously passive, indicate that this approach has strong inclusive potential. This is an important foundation for further development of inclusive learning models in tutoring institutions.

The significance of the results of this study is very important in several aspects. First, from the perspective of non-formal education practices, this study provides empirical evidence that the fun learning approach can be implemented effectively outside of formal schools, which have been the main focus of most studies. These results confirm that tutoring is not only a space for repeating school material, but also a place for transforming fun and meaningful learning experiences. This answers the needs of students and parents for learning methods that are not burdensome, but still improve learning outcomes in real terms.

Second, theoretically, this study broadens the understanding that the fun learning strategy is not just an additional or complementary approach, but rather an integral part of an active learning strategy that can be adapted in various social and educational contexts. Previous research by Alwahidi et al. (2021) confirmed that fun learning contributes to increasing interest in learning in the new normal era. This study complements these findings by confirming that this approach can also be successful in normal conditions, even in local areas that are economically lower middle class.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in expanding the context of implementing fun learning into the realm of non-formal education with a systematic and measurable approach. Previous research by Budianto et al. (2024) in Kampung Nelayan showed the important role of fun learning in community-based learning. However, this study proves that with carefully designed procedures, structured evaluations, and standardized instruments, the fun learning approach can be replicated in other tutoring. This opens up opportunities to develop a special fun learning curriculum for non-formal educational institutions.

In addition to these contributions, this study also produces important links. From the policy perspective of tutoring institutions, these results can be a basis for managers to reform teaching methods, provide training to tutors, and design learning activities that combine elements of play, collaboration, and reflection. For tutors, this study is evidence that creativity in managing classes not only strengthens relationships with students but also has a real impact on their academic results. For students and parents, the fun learning method can increase self-confidence in the quality of learning in non-formal institutions and encourage continued participation in additional learning activities outside formal institutions.

However, this study also has several limitations that need to be considered for further study development. First, the sample size is relatively small (25 students) and only involves one tutoring institution, so the results of this study cannot be generalized widely. Second, the duration of the learning intervention was only carried out for six meetings, which is not enough to evaluate the long-term impact of the fun learning strategy. Some students may show improvement in a short time due to the novelty effect, but it is not yet known whether these results can be maintained over a longer period of time. Third, qualitative data were only obtained from limited interviews with students and tutors, so they do not yet describe a broader perspective, including from parents or institutional managers.

In addition, there has been no testing of differences in effectiveness based on students' learning styles, even though Mardlatillah and Sa'adah (2022) showed that fun learning strategies will be more effective if they are adjusted to students' learning style preferences. This study has not explicitly accommodated this diversity. Finally, limited technological facilities and teaching staff in some institutions may be a challenge if this strategy is replicated elsewhere. Therefore, fun learning strategies need to be designed flexibly and contextually according to the capacity of each institution.

To overcome these limitations, further research is recommended to involve more participants, reach tutoring institutions in various regions, and extend the duration of the intervention to observe long-term effects. In addition, comparative studies between levels of education and the influence of student learning styles on the effectiveness of fun learning are also important to study. Further research can also develop a special fun learning module for tutors, so that this approach can be standardized without losing its flexibility.

Overall, this study strengthens the foundation that fun learning is a relevant, contextual strategy that has proven to be effective in improving the quality of learning in non-formal educational institutions. These results are important not only for educational practitioners, but also for policy makers and researchers who are interested in learning innovations outside formal schools. In the context of Indonesian education which continues to develop, fun learning can be a strategic approach to improve the quality of learning while building positive and memorable learning experiences for students.

Thus, the fun learning strategy can be positioned not only as an alternative learning, but as a strategic approach that needs to be widely adopted in non-formal education. Support from institutions, tutor training, and material adaptation are important factors in ensuring successful implementation. The positive changes that occurred in student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in this study indicate that fun learning is an approach that is not only relevant, but also has a real impact on strengthening the quality of education outside the formal pathway.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study shows that the fun learning strategy applied in the context of non-formal educational institutions, especially tutoring, has a significant positive impact on student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. An increase in pretest to posttest scores of an average of 23 points indicates progress in student understanding after participating in fun learning. Student engagement during the learning process is also very high, as seen from the observation results which reached an average score of 4.55 on a scale of 5, as well as student enthusiasm and perseverance in learning which increased consistently. In addition, student learning motivation also increased substantially, as indicated by the questionnaire score which jumped from 3.18 to 4.5.

This finding strengthens previous literature stating that fun learning is a strategic approach in increasing learning effectiveness (Yuniawatika et al., 2023; Suhari & Sobri, 2025; Prastika et al., 2022). This study specifically contributes to science by expanding the context

of fun learning implementation into the realm of non-formal education which has so far been relatively less explored in depth. Thus, this study not only provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of fun learning in improving learning outcomes but also offers a relevant pedagogical approach for tutoring institutions that are flexible and contextual.

Suggestions for future research include the need to expand the scope of participants and research locations so that the results can be generalized more widely. Comparative studies between tutoring institutions in urban and rural areas are also important to see the variation in the effectiveness of this strategy in different social contexts. Further research is also recommended to develop fun learning modules or learning guides that can be applied by tutors systematically. In addition, further research can examine the long-term effects of this strategy and explore the influence of individual learning styles on the success of the fun learning method. By enriching these aspects, it is hoped that the fun learning strategy can become an integral part of learning in all educational pathways, both formal and non-formal.

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