

Students' Perceptions of Ice-Breaking Games for Motivation in English Learning at Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Motivation is an important factor in supporting students' engagement and participation in English learning, particularly at the junior high school level. However, previous research on ice-breaking activities has focused largely on senior high school and university students, leaving limited evidence on junior high school students' perceptions of how such activities relate to motivation. This study aimed to examine students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in English learning at SMP 2 Ampana Tete, focusing on their interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. A quantitative survey design was employed with 100 students selected through purposive sampling based on their direct participation in English learning activities involving ice-breaking games. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire and supported by structured classroom observations, then analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and mean scores. The findings indicated that students had positive perceptions of ice-breaking games across the five motivational aspects, and classroom observations supported these findings through students' active engagement and participation. These results suggest that ice-breaking games can provide an engaging classroom environment and support students' motivation to participate in English learning.

Keywords: *Students' Perceptions; Ice-Breaking Games; Motivation; English Learning, Junior High School*

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation is an important factor in English language learning because it influences students' willingness to engage in learning activities, sustain attention, and participate in classroom interaction. In foreign language learning contexts such as Indonesia, students often have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom, making classroom participation essential for language development. Students' engagement is influenced not only by their linguistic competence but also by their interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. When classroom activities are perceived as monotonous, difficult, or stressful, students may become less engaged. Therefore, creating a supportive and motivating classroom environment is an important consideration in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly at the junior high school level.

Motivation is particularly relevant for junior high school students because they are developing their academic abilities alongside their social and emotional characteristics. Students may differ in confidence, interest, attention, and willingness to participate, especially when learning English requires them to communicate in a foreign language. Fear of making mistakes, receiving correction, or being laughed at by classmates may cause some students to remain silent despite understanding the learning material. Brown (2001) and Harmer (2007) emphasize the importance of active involvement, meaningful interaction, and a positive classroom atmosphere in language learning. These perspectives suggest that instructional activities combining learning purposes with enjoyable interaction may help students feel more comfortable and become more willing to participate in English lessons.

One activity that teachers can use to create a more engaging classroom environment is an ice-breaking game. In this study, ice-breaking games refer to short, interactive, and enjoyable activities implemented at the beginning of or during an English lesson to reduce tension, attract students' attention, encourage interaction, and prepare students for subsequent learning activities. These activities may include vocabulary games, guessing games, quizzes, songs, question-and-answer activities, movement-based games, and short pair or group challenges. Unlike activities intended solely for entertainment, instructional ice-breaking games can be connected to English learning objectives by encouraging students to respond to questions, use vocabulary, follow instructions, and communicate with classmates. [Farwati et al. \(2019\)](#) discuss ice-breaking activities as a way to reduce classroom tension, attract attention, and create a positive learning environment.

The relationship between ice-breaking games and motivation can be examined through several dimensions, namely interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. [Gardner \(1985\)](#) conceptualizes motivation through effort, desire, and positive attitudes toward achieving a goal, while [Deci \(1976\)](#) distinguishes intrinsic motivation, which involves internal interest and enjoyment, from extrinsic motivation, which is associated with external factors such as rewards and pressure. These perspectives provide a theoretical foundation for understanding students' responses to ice-breaking games. Interesting and varied activities may attract students' attention, while enjoyable experiences may encourage them to engage more willingly. Furthermore, a less formal classroom atmosphere may help students feel more comfortable interacting with their peers. However, enjoyment alone does not necessarily indicate increased motivation, making it important to examine several dimensions of students' experiences.

Ice-breaking games may also encourage peer interaction and active participation. [Brown \(2001\)](#) highlights the importance of interaction in language learning because students need opportunities to use language rather than merely receive information from teachers. Through games, students may answer questions, recall vocabulary, cooperate with classmates, or respond to English instructions. These activities can create opportunities for students to participate in a less formal environment, potentially supporting their confidence and willingness to communicate. [Harmer \(2007\)](#) also emphasizes the importance of a positive classroom atmosphere in supporting students' confidence and communication. Nevertheless, the appropriateness of an activity depends on students' age, language proficiency, classroom conditions, and learning objectives. As [Jenkins \(2009\)](#) suggests, ice-breaking activities should be selected according to the needs of the learners and the classroom situation.

Previous studies have examined students' experiences with ice-breaking activities in English learning. [Mahmud et al. \(2023\)](#) reported that ice-breaking activities helped students maintain attention and increased their motivation to participate in English lessons. [Sasan et al. \(2023\)](#) highlighted students' experiences of greater comfort, confidence, peer connection, and engagement following ice-breaking activities. Similarly, [Al Ghifarah & Pusparini \(2023\)](#) reported that students perceived ice-breaking activities as enjoyable and helpful in making English learning more relaxed and less intimidating. [Kurdi & Meena \(2023\)](#) also discussed the perceived benefits of ice-breakers for classroom interaction and collaboration among tertiary-level students. Collectively, these studies suggest that ice-breaking activities can be associated with positive classroom experiences, although students' responses may differ according to their educational context and individual characteristics.

Despite these contributions, further research is needed to understand junior high school students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in relation to specific motivational dimensions. Previous studies have examined various aspects of ice-breaking activities, including attention, engagement, confidence, enjoyment, interaction, and collaboration, but some have focused on senior high school or university students. Findings from older learners cannot automatically be generalized to younger students because educational experiences, language proficiency, confidence, and classroom expectations may differ. Moreover, students' perceptions may vary according to their school environment, teacher practices, peer relationships, and opportunities to use English. Therefore, investigating students at SMP 2

Ampana Tete can provide context-specific information about how junior high school students experience ice-breaking games in their English lessons.

Students' perceptions are central to this study because they reflect how learners interpret and give meaning to their educational experiences. Schunk (2012) discusses perception in relation to how individuals interpret experiences, while Deci (1976) and Gardner (1985) provide perspectives for understanding motivation through effort, positive attitudes, interest, and enjoyment. Examining students' perceptions is important because teachers' intentions do not necessarily correspond to students' actual experiences. Some students may find ice-breaking games interesting and enjoyable, whereas others may consider them confusing, distracting, or uncomfortable. Therefore, the present study examines perceptions through five indicators: interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. These indicators provide a structured way to describe students' experiences without assuming that all learners respond positively to the activities.

The use of ice-breaking games also requires appropriate planning and classroom management. Short, varied, and enjoyable activities may help refresh students' attention and create a positive learning atmosphere, as discussed by Slattery & Willis (2001). However, activities that are too difficult, excessively competitive, time-consuming, or unrelated to the lesson may distract students from the learning objectives. Teachers therefore need to consider students' language levels, interests, and classroom conditions when selecting activities. Ice-breaking games can be connected to English learning through vocabulary practice, simple communicative expressions, listening to instructions, or interaction with classmates. The present study does not attempt to identify a universally effective game; rather, it examines how students perceive the ice-breaking games they experience in their English learning context.

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach using a non-experimental survey design supported by classroom observation. The participants consist of 100 Grade VIII and Grade IX students at SMP 2 Ampana Tete who were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevant experiences with English learning and ice-breaking games. Data are collected through a close-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale, with items addressing students' perceptions of interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. Classroom observation serves as a supporting technique to document visible behaviors, including participation, enthusiasm, responsiveness, attention, confidence, and interaction with classmates. The questionnaire represents students' reported perceptions, while observation provides additional information about their classroom behavior. The combination of these techniques supports a more comprehensive description of students' experiences.

The study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to English Language Teaching. Theoretically, it extends discussions of ice-breaking games by examining them specifically through students' motivational perceptions in a junior high school context. Gardner's (1985) perspective on motivation, Deci's (1976) concept of intrinsic motivation, and Schunk's (2012) discussion of perception provide a foundation for interpreting students' responses. Practically, the findings may help English teachers understand which aspects of ice-breaking games students perceive positively and consider how to adapt activities according to learners' needs. The findings may also provide a reference for future researchers investigating similar activities in different educational settings. Nevertheless, because the study is non-experimental, its findings describe students' perceptions and observed classroom behaviors rather than establishing that ice-breaking games directly cause improvements in motivation or English proficiency.

The research question guiding this study is: What are the students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in learning English in terms of motivation at SMP 2 Ampana Tete? Accordingly, the objective is to investigate students' perceptions of ice-breaking games, focusing on interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. By examining these dimensions through questionnaire responses supported by classroom observation, the study seeks to describe how students experience ice-breaking games in their

English lessons. The research addresses the contextual gap concerning junior high school students at SMP 2 Ampana Tete, the focus gap concerning motivation, and the indicator gap concerning the five specific motivational dimensions. Ultimately, the study aims to provide empirical insight into students' experiences and inform the use of engaging, appropriate, and student-centered activities in English language learning.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative non-experimental survey design to examine junior high school students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in English learning, particularly in relation to their motivation. A survey design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain students' self-reported perceptions from a relatively large group of respondents and describe patterns across several motivational dimensions without manipulating variables or implementing an experimental treatment. The questionnaire served as the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data on students' interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate, while a structured observation checklist was used as supporting evidence of students' observable classroom responses during ice-breaking activities. The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while the observation data were used to support the interpretation of the questionnaire findings.

Respondents and Sampling

The study was conducted at SMP 2 Ampana Tete during English learning activities involving ice-breaking games. The participants consisted of 100 students from Grade VIII and Grade IX, who were selected through purposive sampling. The participants were selected based on three criteria: (1) they were enrolled as Grade VIII or Grade IX students at SMP 2 Ampana Tete, (2) they had participated in English lessons in which ice-breaking games were implemented, and (3) they had sufficient experience with the activities to provide informed perceptions through the questionnaire. Purposive sampling was used because the study required respondents who had direct experience with ice-breaking games rather than students who had not encountered the activities under investigation. Before data collection, the researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the study and provided instructions for completing the questionnaire. The 100 selected students then completed the questionnaire based on their experiences and perceptions of ice-breaking games during English lessons.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect the data in this study, namely a questionnaire and a structured observation checklist. The questionnaire functioned as the primary instrument, while the observation checklist was used as a supporting instrument. The use of these two instruments allowed the researcher to obtain quantitative information from the students and direct classroom evidence concerning their responses to ice-breaking games. The questionnaire was designed to collect data regarding students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in English learning, particularly in relation to motivation. The observation checklist was used to record students' visible behaviors during the implementation of ice-breaking activities.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as the primary instrument to obtain quantitative data regarding students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in learning English at SMP 2 Ampana Tete. It consisted of close-ended statements using a Likert scale. The questionnaire was designed to identify students' perceptions in terms of motivation, particularly their interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate during English lessons. The questionnaire items were developed based on motivation theories proposed by Robert Gardner and Edward Deci, with attention to students' motivational experiences during English learning activities. The fixed response options enabled the researcher to collect

students' responses systematically and identify general patterns in their perceptions toward the use of ice-breaking games. The questionnaire was distributed to the 100 selected respondents after they had experienced ice-breaking activities in their English learning.

Observation Checklist

The observation checklist was used as a supporting instrument to obtain direct evidence of students' behavior during the implementation of ice-breaking games in English lessons. The checklist contained several indicators related to students' motivation and classroom participation, including participation, attention, enthusiasm, confidence, responsiveness, and interaction with classmates. During the observation, the researcher recorded students' visible responses to the ice-breaking activities systematically. The observation focused on whether students actively participated, paid attention to the teacher's instructions, demonstrated enthusiasm, interacted with their classmates, and showed interest in the learning activities. The observation data were used to support the findings obtained from the questionnaire by providing direct classroom evidence concerning students' behavior during the learning process.

Procedures

The data collection procedure was conducted at SMP 2 Ampana Tete during English learning activities in which ice-breaking games were implemented. First, the researcher identified the students who met the criteria for participation in the study and selected 100 students from Grade VIII and Grade IX through purposive sampling. Second, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and provided instructions concerning how the questionnaire should be completed. Third, the questionnaire was distributed to the selected respondents. The students were asked to respond to each statement according to their experiences and perceptions of ice-breaking games during English lessons.

After the questionnaire was completed, the researcher conducted structured classroom observations during English lessons involving ice-breaking activities. The researcher used the observation checklist to record students' visible behaviors, including participation, attention, enthusiasm, confidence, responsiveness, and interaction. The observation was conducted directly during the learning process so that the researcher could obtain supporting evidence of how students responded to the activities. The questionnaire provided quantitative information concerning students' perceptions, while the observation provided direct evidence of students' classroom behavior. The combination of the two data collection techniques was intended to provide a more comprehensive description of students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in terms of motivation in learning English at SMP 2 Ampana Tete.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis because the study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design. The questionnaire responses were analyzed by calculating the percentage and mean scores of the students' responses. The analysis was intended to identify general patterns and trends in students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in relation to motivation in English learning. The questionnaire results were presented in tables and interpreted descriptively based on the responses provided by the respondents.

The observation data were also analyzed descriptively. The researcher calculated the frequency of students' observed behaviors during the implementation of ice-breaking games, particularly participation, attention, enthusiasm, confidence, responsiveness, and interaction. The observation results were converted into percentages and used as supporting information for the questionnaire findings. The questionnaire functioned as the main source of quantitative data, while the observation results provided additional classroom evidence to support the interpretation of students' perceptions and motivational responses. Through this analysis, the study aimed to provide a descriptive understanding of students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in learning English in terms of motivation at SMP 2 Ampana Tete.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Before analyzing the questionnaire responses, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that the instrument was appropriate for data collection. The validity test was conducted using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation through SPSS, where an item is considered valid if the calculated correlation coefficient (r -calculated) is greater than the r -table value (0.195) at the 5% significance level.

Table 1. Validity Test Results of Each Questionnaire Item

Variable	Item	r -calculated	r -table	Sig.	Status
1. Interest in learning English	S1	0.543	0.195	<0.001	Valid
	S2	0.640	0.195	<0.001	Valid
2. Confidence during English lessons	S3	0.623	0.195	<0.001	Valid
	S4	0.704	0.195	<0.001	Valid
3. Enjoyment during learning activities	S5	0.650	0.195	<0.001	Valid
	S6	0.754	0.195	<0.001	Valid
4. Attention during English lessons	S7	0.739	0.195	<0.001	Valid
	S8	0.653	0.195	<0.001	Valid
5. Willingness to participate	S9	0.666	0.195	<0.001	Valid
	S10	0.721	0.195	<0.001	Valid

Table 1 shows that all ten questionnaire items measuring the five motivational aspects (interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate) obtained r -calculated values higher than the r -table value of 0.195, with significance values below 0.05. Therefore, all questionnaire items were considered valid and appropriate for measuring students' perceptions of the use of ice-breaking games.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Standard	Status
0.864	0.60	Reliable

Table 2 presents the reliability test results using Cronbach's Alpha, which obtained a coefficient of 0.864. This value exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60, indicating that the questionnaire is reliable and has good internal consistency. Since all items were found to be both valid and reliable, the instrument was considered appropriate for measuring students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in relation to their motivation in learning English.

Table 3. Summary of questionnaire results on students' perceptions of ice-breaking games

Aspect	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Positive (%)
Interest	67.5	31.5	0.5	0.5	99
Confidence	53.5	45.5	0.5	0.5	99
Enjoyment	71.0	28.0	0.0	1.0	99
Attention	49.5	48.5	1.5	0.5	98
Willingness to Participate	55.5	42.5	1.0	1.0	98

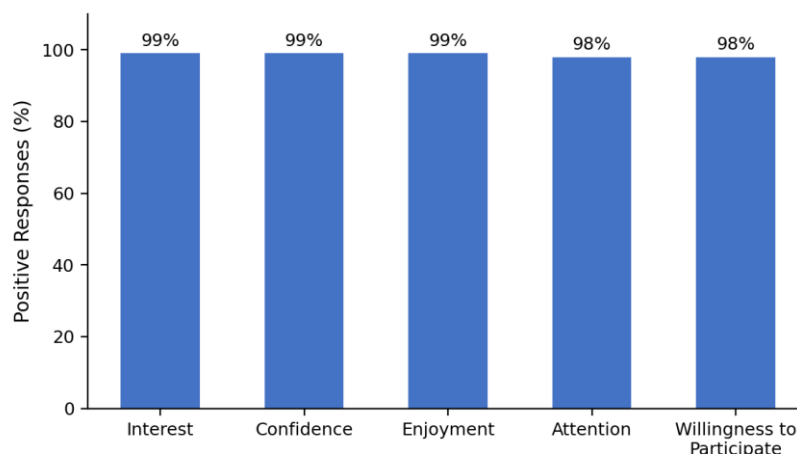


Figure 1. Percentage of positive responses across motivational aspects

Students' Interest in Learning English through Ice-Breaking Games

The questionnaire results showed that students had highly positive perceptions of ice-breaking games in relation to their interest in learning English. Of the responses, 67.5% were Strongly Agree and 31.5% were Agree, resulting in 99% positive responses. Only 0.5% selected Disagree and 0.5% Strongly Disagree. The observation findings supported these results, as students demonstrated very high enthusiasm and active participation during the activities. They were observed raising their hands, volunteering to answer questions, and continuing to participate in English learning after the ice-breaking activities.

These findings suggest that ice-breaking games were perceived as engaging activities that could stimulate students' interest in English learning. [Gardner \(1985\)](#) explains that positive attitudes and motivation are important in supporting learners' involvement in second language learning, while [Brown \(2001\)](#) emphasizes the importance of interactive classroom activities. The finding is also consistent with [Farwati et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Al Ghifarah & Pusparini \(2023\)](#), who reported positive perceptions of ice-breaking activities in relation to students' interest and motivation.

Students' Confidence during English Learning

Students also showed highly positive perceptions regarding their confidence during English lessons. The questionnaire results indicated that 53.5% of responses were Strongly Agree and 45.5% were Agree, giving a total of 99% positive responses. Only 0.5% selected Disagree and 0.5% Strongly Disagree. Observation results further showed very high confidence, with students raising their hands, volunteering to participate, and responding to teacher instructions without hesitation.

The results indicate that ice-breaking games were associated with a more comfortable environment for classroom participation. [Harmer \(2007\)](#) emphasizes that a positive classroom atmosphere can support students' confidence and willingness to communicate. The present finding is also consistent with previous studies showing that ice-breaking activities can create a relaxed learning environment and encourage students' motivation and involvement ([Al Ghifarah & Pusparini, 2023](#); [Mahmud et al., 2023](#)).

Students' Enjoyment of English Learning Activities

The third aspect showed that students perceived ice-breaking games very positively in terms of enjoyment. The questionnaire results revealed that 71% of responses were Strongly Agree and 28% were Agree, while 1% were Strongly Disagree and none were Disagree. Thus, 99% of the responses were positive. Classroom observation supported these findings, as students were observed smiling, laughing, raising their hands, and actively participating during the activities.

These findings suggest that ice-breaking games provided variation from regular classroom activities and created a more enjoyable learning atmosphere. Deci (1976) explains that interest and enjoyment are related to intrinsic motivation, while Schunk (2012) relates motivation to students' involvement in learning. Similarly, Mahmud et al. (2023) found that ice-breaking activities could reduce boredom and create a positive classroom atmosphere.

Students' Attention during English Lessons

Students' perceptions were also highly positive regarding attention during English lessons. The questionnaire showed that 49.5% of responses were Strongly Agree and 48.5% were Agree, resulting in 98% positive responses. Only 1.5% selected Disagree and 0.5% Strongly Disagree. The observation results categorized students' attention as High, with students observed looking at the teacher, listening to instructions, following activities, and responding actively after the ice-breaking session.

The findings indicate that ice-breaking games were perceived as helpful in maintaining students' focus and involvement in English learning. This finding is consistent with who explains that motivation is related to attention, effort, and involvement, who emphasizes the importance of varied and engaging activities. Therefore, the positive questionnaire responses and classroom observations together suggest that ice-breaking activities supported students' continued attention during English lessons.

Students' Willingness to Participate in English Learning

The fifth aspect showed highly positive perceptions of students' willingness to participate. The questionnaire results indicated that 55.5% of responses were Strongly Agree and 42.5% were Agree, resulting in 98% positive responses. Only 1% selected Disagree and 1% Strongly Disagree. These findings were supported by the observation, which showed very high willingness to participate, as students voluntarily raised their hands, answered questions, and joined classroom activities without being forced.

The findings suggest that ice-breaking games provided opportunities for students to become more actively involved in classroom activities. Active participation is an important element of language learning, and engaging activities can encourage students' involvement. The finding also indicates that ice-breaking activities may support student engagement, participation, interaction, and motivation.

Classroom Observation as Supporting Evidence

The observation checklist provided supporting evidence for the questionnaire findings. It consisted of eight indicators covering enthusiasm, attention, active participation, interaction with classmates, confidence, responses to teacher instructions, interest in English learning, and willingness to participate. Six indicators received a rating of 5 (Very High), while attention received a rating of 4 (High) and interaction with classmates received a rating of 3 (Moderate).

Overall, students demonstrated enthusiasm, active participation, confidence, interest, and willingness to participate during the learning activities. Although interaction with classmates was only moderate, the observation results generally supported the positive questionnaire findings. These results suggest that motivating classroom activities can encourage student involvement and contribute to a positive learning atmosphere.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in learning English in terms of motivation at SMP 2 Ampana Tete. The findings obtained from the questionnaire and observation showed that the students generally had positive perceptions toward the use of ice-breaking games during English learning activities. The questionnaire results indicated very high positive responses across all five motivational dimensions, namely interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. In terms of interest, 99% of the students responded positively, consisting of 67.5% who strongly agreed and 31.5%

who agreed that ice-breaking games increased their interest in English learning. Confidence also received 99% positive responses, with 53.5% strongly agreeing and 45.5% agreeing. Similarly, enjoyment reached 99% positive responses, while attention and willingness to participate each reached 98%. These findings indicate that students tended to perceive ice-breaking games as activities that made English lessons more interesting, enjoyable, and comfortable, while also encouraging them to pay attention and become more willing to participate. A similar pattern was reported by [Adi et al. \(2021\)](#), whose study found differences in students' English-learning motivation following the implementation of ice-breaking activities. The similarity suggests that ice-breaking may serve as a useful supporting activity for creating a more engaging classroom experience, although the present study describes students' perceptions rather than testing causal effects.

The very high level of students' interest suggests that ice-breaking games were perceived as useful for attracting students' attention and making English learning more appealing. The questionnaire showed that 67.5% of students strongly agreed and 31.5% agreed that ice-breaking games increased their interest, resulting in 99% positive responses. The observation findings supported this result because students' interest in English learning was rated at level 5, categorized as very high. This suggests that students were not merely responding positively through the questionnaire but also demonstrated observable interest during classroom activities. [Artati \(2021\)](#) investigated Kahoot as an ice-breaker in EFL learning and reported higher motivation among students in the experimental group than in the control group. This provides a relevant comparison for understanding how an enjoyable, game-based activity may support students' interest in learning. Confidence showed a similar pattern, with 53.5% of students strongly agreeing and 45.5% agreeing that ice-breaking games helped increase their confidence, producing 99% positive responses. The observation checklist further indicated that students' confidence was rated very high. A relaxed classroom atmosphere may provide students with opportunities to participate without feeling excessive pressure, particularly when activities are presented in a playful and less formal manner. When students feel comfortable participating in classroom activities, they may become more willing to express themselves and take part in subsequent learning tasks. Thus, the high responses for interest and confidence suggest that ice-breaking games were perceived as supportive activities that could help establish a more positive psychological atmosphere for English learning.

The findings concerning enjoyment and attention also demonstrate the positive perceptions of students toward ice-breaking games. Enjoyment received 99% positive responses, with 71% of students strongly agreeing and 28% agreeing that ice-breaking games made English learning more enjoyable, while only 1% strongly disagreed. The observation results also indicated high levels of enthusiasm and active participation, which are closely related to students' enjoyment of classroom activities. In a study involving ninth-grade junior high school students, [Wahyuni & Hz \(2024\)](#) examined students' experiences of the Banana Boom ice-breaking activity and reported positive changes in students' experiences and enthusiasm for learning. This comparison is relevant because both studies involve younger EFL learners and focus on how game-based activities are experienced in classroom settings. Attention also showed a very positive result, with 49.5% of students strongly agreeing and 48.5% agreeing that ice-breaking games helped them maintain attention during English learning, resulting in 98% positive responses. The observation checklist rated students' attention as high, providing additional support for the questionnaire findings. In the context of this study, ice-breaking games may have provided a change of pace from regular instructional activities, allowing students to become more alert and engaged before continuing with the main lesson. However, the slightly lower percentage for attention compared with interest, confidence, and enjoyment indicates that attention may be more variable than other motivational dimensions. Students may enjoy an activity and show interest while still experiencing differences in their ability to maintain concentration throughout the lesson. Consequently, ice-breaking games can be considered a useful supporting activity for gaining

and maintaining students' attention, although their usefulness may also depend on how the activities are selected, timed, and connected to the learning objectives.

Willingness to participate also received a highly positive response, with 55.5% of students strongly agreeing and 42.5% agreeing that ice-breaking games encouraged their willingness to participate, producing 98% positive responses. The observation results reinforced this finding because students' willingness to participate was rated very high, while active participation was also rated very high. Students were observed becoming enthusiastic, responding to teacher instructions, and taking part in classroom activities. [Pratama et al. \(2021\)](#) examined an ice-breaking application as a strategy for addressing boredom and supporting learning motivation. Their findings indicated differences in students' motivation after the activity was implemented, offering a relevant comparison for interpreting the positive participation observed in the present study. The observation checklist further showed that enthusiasm, active participation, confidence, responsiveness to teacher instructions, interest in English learning, and willingness to participate were all rated at level 5 or very high. Attention was rated at level 4 or high, while interaction with classmates was rated at level 3 or moderate. The moderate rating for interaction is important because it indicates that although students were highly enthusiastic and willing to participate, peer interaction was not as strong as the other observed indicators. This may suggest that students were more responsive to the teacher and the activity itself than to extended interaction with their classmates. Therefore, teachers may consider designing ice-breaking games that require greater cooperation, pair work, group discussion, or peer-based challenges so that students have more opportunities to communicate and interact with one another. Such activities may strengthen not only participation but also interpersonal interaction within the English learning environment.

The consistency between the questionnaire and observation findings provides a basis for understanding students' perceptions of ice-breaking games in relation to motivation. The questionnaire demonstrated that 98–99% of students gave positive responses across the five motivational dimensions, while the observation showed very high levels of enthusiasm, active participation, confidence, responsiveness to teacher instructions, interest in English learning, and willingness to participate. Recent research by [Irfani & Ma'rifatulloh \(2025\)](#) examined digital ice-breaking activities among eighth-grade students and reported a significant difference between pre-intervention and post-intervention motivation scores. Their study provides a relevant comparison with the present findings, particularly regarding the potential of structured game-based activities to support motivation among junior high school learners. At the same time, the moderate level of peer interaction in the present study indicates that there remains an opportunity to improve the collaborative aspect of ice-breaking activities. The findings suggest that ice-breaking games can function as a supporting classroom strategy that helps create a comfortable and engaging environment in which students are more interested, confident, attentive, and willing to participate. Since this study employed a non-experimental survey design, the findings do not establish that ice-breaking games directly caused changes in students' motivation. Instead, they demonstrate that students perceived these activities positively and that their classroom behaviors observed during the activities were generally consistent with those perceptions. Based on these findings, ice-breaking games may be considered a useful supporting approach in English learning, particularly when the activities are appropriately selected and connected to students' needs and classroom objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that students at SMP 2 Ampana Tete perceived ice-breaking games positively in English learning, particularly in relation to five motivational dimensions: interest, confidence, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to participate. The questionnaire results showed highly positive responses, with interest, confidence, and enjoyment each reaching 99%, while attention and willingness to participate each reached 98%. These findings indicate that students generally associated ice-breaking games with enjoyable and engaging

English learning experiences. The observation findings further supported these perceptions, as enthusiasm, active participation, confidence, responsiveness to teacher instructions, interest in English learning, and willingness to participate were categorized as very high, while attention was high and interaction with classmates was moderate. The moderate level of peer interaction suggests that future activities could incorporate more opportunities for collaboration and communication. Overall, the findings indicate that ice-breaking games were perceived as a useful supporting strategy for creating an engaging English learning environment. However, because the study used a descriptive survey design, the findings do not establish a causal effect on motivation. Future research should employ experimental or comparative designs to examine this relationship further.

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