ABSTRACT

English vocabulary mastery remains a critical yet challenging aspect of early language education for young learners. This study investigated the effectiveness of a digital Snakes and Ladders game in improving English vocabulary mastery among second-grade students at a private Islamic school in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia, where instruction relied heavily on conventional textbooks and one-way instructional videos, resulting in low student engagement and poor vocabulary retention. This research was conducted because existing gamification studies rarely focus specifically on second-grade learners aged 7–8 who require concrete visual-kinestetik aids, and there is a notable scarcity of such investigations within Islamic school environments in Indonesia. A pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was employed with 23 second-grade students selected through purposive sampling, using a vocabulary recognition worksheet titled "Parts of the Body" as both the pre-test and post-test instrument, with data analyzed through descriptive statistics, a paired sample t-test, and Normalized Gain (N-Gain) score analysis. The results revealed a mean score increase from 4.52 on the pre-test to 6.21 on the post-test, with the paired sample t-test confirming statistical significance at t-statistic 3.16, exceeding the t-critical value of 2.07, and a p-value of 0.004. The N-Gain analysis produced a mean score of 0.31, categorized as "Medium" effectiveness. These findings indicate that the digital Snakes and Ladders game positively contributed to students' vocabulary development by creating a more engaging and interactive learning environment, though the moderate effectiveness reflected the short treatment duration and individual learner variation. In conclusion, while the digital game effectively boosted young learners' engagement, its implementation requires extended treatment and additional teacher scaffolding. Future researchers are suggested to employ a quasi-experimental design and explore broader vocabulary topics to maximize long-term lexical retention.