

The Effectiveness of Using Montessori-Based Wordwall Educational Games on Elementary School Students' Beginning Reading Skills at Sanggar Bimbingan Pandan Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a fundamental skill essential for academic success; however, in reality, there are still students who struggle with reading because they cannot comprehend the commands or content within books. This skill is particularly vital, as much of human knowledge is acquired through reading. Speaking and reading are uniquely important in the development of communication and knowledge. This research aims to determine whether the use of Montessori-based word wall educational games can influence early reading skills of first-grade students at Sanggar Pandan Guidance, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study employs a quantitative approach using an experimental method. The research was conducted at Studio Bimbingan Aisyiyah, located on Jl. Kijing No. 15, Kampung Pandan, Kuala Lumpur. The population consists of first-grade elementary students at Sanggar Pandan Guidance, with a sample size of 8 students. The instruments used were performance tests and observations, while the data analysis techniques included expert judgment validity testing and one-sample t-test hypothesis testing. The results show that during the pre-test (before using the educational games), students' early reading skills were categorized as "fair" with a percentage of 58% and a t-value of 177.193 > 1.89458. After implementing the word wall educational games, the post-test results indicated a significant improvement, with students achieving a "good" category at 84.37% and a t-value of 105.417 > 1.89458. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the use of Montessori-based word wall educational games is effective in improving the early reading skills of first-grade elementary students at Sanggar Pandan Guidance, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Keywords: *Educational Games, Wordwall, Montessori, Early Reading Skills, Elementary School Students*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is the key to achieving learning success, yet many students still struggle with reading due to difficulties in understanding book instructions. This skill is essential for students as language skills play a crucial role in the development of knowledge and communication. Reading is vital for knowledge acquisition since most learning occurs through reading (Rahman 2020) .

Reading skills should be taught to students as they are fundamental to daily life, and reading activities are integral to various aspects of life. These skills can be applied anywhere, anytime, and are especially emphasized in school learning (Rahman 2020) . Research conducted by PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) under the IEA (The International Association for the Evaluation of Achievement) in 2011 showed that elementary school children have low reading skills, falling below the international average. These findings indicate that literacy has not become a deeply ingrained culture among Indonesian elementary school students (Muhyidin et al, 2018).

Reading skills in elementary school are divided into two levels: beginning reading and advanced reading. Beginning reading is taught in grades I and II, starting with the

introduction of letters and written symbols, emphasizing aspects such as recognizing letters, distinguishing initial sounds, reading meaningful and meaningless words, and speed reading.

Early reading skills influence later reading development, as beginning reading serves as a foundational skill that must be mastered before progressing to more complex reading levels. The success of student learning is largely determined by their mastery of reading competencies (Heriantoko, 2021).

The goal of beginning reading instruction is to enable students to understand and pronounce written text naturally, serving as a foundation for more advanced reading. Additionally, early reading aims to help students recognize written symbols (letters, syllables, and words) and develop fluency in reading simple sentences accurately (Ningsih et al., 2021).

In reality, many lower-grade students struggle to master reading skills due to various difficulties, such as distinguishing letters with similar shapes, differentiating between letters with similar sounds, recognizing syllables with multiple vowels or consonants, and reading words with more than three syllables (Nurani et al., 2021).

Observations indicate that many first-grade students have not yet completed their beginning reading proficiency. While they may recognize letters, they struggle to arrange them into syllables and words. When reading, students often spell out individual letters rather than forming whole words, such as reading /pa-pa/ as /pe-a-pe-a/ or /bu-ku/ as /be-u-ka-u/. Some students also mispronounce the alphabet, leading to incorrect word articulation. These difficulties negatively impact students' confidence and focus in learning.

At the beginning of reading instruction, students initially show enthusiasm. However, persistent reading difficulties cause them to lose attention quickly. After about 30 minutes, some students begin ignoring the teacher, chatting with classmates, or even running around the classroom. This highlights the need for more innovative and engaging learning methods tailored to students' needs.

Innovative learning media play a crucial role in supporting early reading skills, particularly for students struggling to form words from letters. Learning media not only enhance student engagement but also facilitate a deeper understanding of material, providing a varied and interactive learning experience (Kusnadi, 2024). However, at SD Sanggar Bimbingan Pandan Kuala Lumpur, available learning media remain limited to blackboards and textbooks. Therefore, technology-based solutions, such as Montessori-based educational wordwall games, are needed to make reading instruction more interactive and engaging.

Educational wordwall games offer a web-based application for creating interactive learning media, including quizzes, matching activities, pairings, anagrams, word searches, and grouping exercises. This application provides free, premium, and pro versions, allowing users to create and share content online or print materials for offline use. The platform offers 18 free templates, enabling easy adaptation of activities. Teachers can also develop their own assignments.

Research has shown that wordwall educational games positively impact elementary school students' early reading skills. A study by Damara et al. (2024) titled "Application of Wordwall Media to Improve Elementary School Students' Early Reading Skills" demonstrated that wordwall media significantly improved first-grade students' reading proficiency at SDN 03 Taman Kota Madiun. The student completion rate increased from 60% in the first cycle to 90% in the second cycle.

Similarly, research by Effendi et al., (2024) titled "Use of Wordwall Application Media to Improve Beginning Reading Skills of Elementary School Students in Bojongloa" found that students' average reading scores improved from 48 in the pre-cycle to 65 in the first cycle, reaching 80 in the second cycle.

Additionally, a study by Aini et al. (2024) titled "Development of Wordwall Educational Game Media as Indonesian Language Learning Media for Elementary School Students" concluded that wordwall educational games are effective in improving first-grade students' comprehension at SDN 3 Made Lamongan.

Previous studies confirm that technology-based media, such as wordwall, enhance students' early reading skills. Therefore, using educational wordwall games has become increasingly important in addressing students' early reading challenges. This media innovatively engages students in recognizing letters and words, promoting better literacy development.

Considering these findings, the researcher aims to explore the challenges of weak early reading skills among students. Furthermore, teachers must understand how to implement Montessori-based educational wordwall games effectively. By integrating this media into teaching, educators can enhance students' comprehension and create a more engaging learning experience. Consequently, this study is titled: "The Effectiveness of Using Montessori-Based Educational Wordwall Games on Elementary School Students' Beginning Reading Skills at Sanggar Bimbingan Pandan Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia".

Literature Review

Wordwall

Wordwall is a digital game platform accessible through a website, offering various game-based learning activities and interactive questions. Educators can utilize this platform as a tool to enhance lesson delivery and improve students' comprehension (Nurhayati, 2024). Wordwall serves as an interactive learning medium that incorporates technology, such as smartphones or laptops, to facilitate student engagement in classroom activities (Purnamasari et al., 2022). It is a browser-based application specifically designed as a learning resource, instructional tool, and assessment aid that provides an enjoyable experience for students. Wordwall also offers examples of teacher-created activities, serving as inspiration for new users (Putri, 2020).

Wordwall functions as a web-based learning platform in the form of simple games where students follow given instructions and select the correct answers by clicking designated objects. The application is user-friendly and can be easily accessed by both students and educators (Minarta & Pamungkas, 2022). Below is an image of the initial interface of the Wordwall platform.

Based on the descriptions above, Wordwall is a web-based digital game platform designed to support interactive learning. With its diverse range of games and question formats, the platform simplifies lesson delivery and enhances student comprehension. Wordwall can be accessed via smartphones or laptops, making it an effective tool for classroom learning. In addition to being a teaching aid, Wordwall also functions as an engaging assessment tool, allowing new users to utilize existing teacher-created activities as inspiration for developing their own content.

Montessori

The Montessori method is a learning approach developed by Maria Montessori, an Italian physician renowned worldwide for her contributions to early childhood education. This method is widely applied in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) due to its emphasis on granting children the freedom to develop their personalities, allowing them to explore their surroundings based on their interests (Rahmi, 2023).

The Montessori method, designed for lower-grade education, divides the general developmental stages of students into three phases (Agustina, 2020): a) Age 0-6 years (first period): During this phase, children rapidly absorb information and develop an understanding of concepts through environmental experiences. Language skills emerge gradually and continue to improve through consistent training and refinement. b) Age 6-12 years (second period): This phase is referred to as the "childhood period" in Montessori education, characterized by steady cognitive and social development. c) Age 12-18 years (third period): This is the "adolescence period," marked by significant physical changes and the transition toward maturity.

The Montessori method is a student-centered approach that incorporates learning materials or media known as "apparatus." This method encourages direct student engagement in the learning process, making it more interactive and enjoyable. By using concrete learning tools, students gain meaningful and natural learning experiences. Moreover, the Montessori method does not only focus on students' cognitive development but also considers their overall growth to align with the learning process.

Based on these perspectives, the Montessori method is a student-centered learning approach that adapts instruction to students' individual needs while incorporating concrete media. This method enables students to learn according to their interests and preferences, fostering a more personalized and effective learning experience.

Reading Skills

Reading is derived from the word "read," which means comprehending written text. In Arabic, it is referred to as "iqra'," and in English, it is "reading," both of which are fundamental in human education. The term "iqra'" signifies reading, analyzing, understanding, and recognizing various forms of knowledge—whether written or unwritten. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of reading, as illustrated in the verse: "Read in the name of your Lord who created" (Meylana, 2020).

Reading is a complex activity that involves multiple cognitive processes, including comprehension, imagination, observation, and memory retention (Soedarsono, 2018). Early reading is a crucial stage in the reading learning process for elementary school students in lower grades. At this stage, students develop reading proficiency, master reading techniques, and grasp the meaning of texts effectively. Consequently, teachers must design well-structured reading lessons to foster students' interest and engagement. A well-planned reading curriculum helps students recognize reading as an enjoyable and beneficial activity. Thus, teachers play a pivotal role in motivating students to develop reading skills (Prioritas, 2020).

Based on the aforementioned perspectives, early reading is a foundational stage in the reading learning process for young students. It involves recognizing letter sequences and associating them with meaningful sounds. The primary objective is to equip students with the ability to read fluently, with accurate pronunciation and proper intonation.

METHOD

Based on the problems to be studied, the researcher chose the approach to be used in this study, namely the type of quantitative research using the experimental method. Experimental research is research that tries to find a causal relationship between independent variables and dependent variables, where the independent variables are deliberately controlled and manipulated (Abraham & Supriyati, 2022). The plan used in this study is one-group pretest posttest. This study was conducted in only one class to find out how effective using Montessori-based educational wordwall games is on students' early reading skills.

Table 1. *One Group Pretest-Posttest Design*

Class	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Experiment	O ¹	X	O ²

Information :

- O¹ = Initial test (*pretest*), the child's initial ability to read at the beginning
- X = Treatment (*Treatment*), practice skills read the beginning with using educational games word wall based on montessori .
- O² = Test final (*posttest*) ability child in skills read the beginning after given treatment with using educational games word wall based on montessori .

This study was conducted at Studio Bimbingan Aisyiyah, located at Jl. Kijing No. 15, Kampung Pandan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The site was selected due to the implementation of the International Real Work Lecture Program (KKNI) at the studio, which provided the researcher with the opportunity to directly observe the learning environment and the early reading abilities of first-grade elementary students. Observations revealed that students experienced significant challenges in early reading, such as recognizing letters, blending letters into syllables, and reading simple words. Furthermore, the instructional methods applied were still conventional, highlighting the need for innovative approaches to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Conducting the research at this site allowed the researcher to assess the effectiveness of Montessori-based word wall educational games in improving early reading skills among first-grade students.

The research was carried out over a period of less than one month, from September to October 2024. The population of this study consisted of all first-grade students at Sanggar Pandan Guidance, totaling eight students. This population was selected because it directly aligned with the research focus—improving early reading skills through the Montessori approach using word wall educational games. The sample included all eight students, thus representing the entire population.

The independent variable in this study was the use of Montessori-based word wall educational games, while the dependent variable was the students' early reading skills. The instruments used for data collection included performance tests and observations. According to Sugiyono (2019), research instruments are tools used to measure and gather data, such as tests, questionnaires, and interviews. The data analysis techniques employed in this study included expert judgment for validity testing and hypothesis testing. The evaluation of students' early reading skills was categorized based on predetermined criteria.

Table 2. Assessment Categorization

Percentage	Category
≤ 44%	Not enough
≤ 45% - 64%	Enough
≤ 65% - 84%	Good
≥ 85%	Very well

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the validator's assessment of the performance test sheet for early reading skills, all validated components—namely letter recognition, syllable reading, reading of meaningful words, reading with comprehension, and reading fluency—received the highest rating of 4. This indicates that, in terms of content validity, the test sheet was considered excellent by the expert validators. The overall eligibility percentage reached 100%, signifying that the instrument fully meets the required standards for assessing early reading skills.

However, the validator provided specific feedback indicating that the test sheet required minor revisions prior to full implementation. The suggested revision pertained to a layout issue, specifically the placement of the validation comment box too close to the designated

area for the expert validator's signature. In response, the researcher made appropriate adjustments to increase the spacing and improve the layout.

Therefore, while the test sheet was generally deemed suitable for use, these refinements were necessary to ensure optimal functionality and accuracy in measuring early reading proficiency among students. The documentation of this validation, including the expert's comments and suggestions, can be reviewed in the validation sheet image provided by the validator.

LEMBAR VALIDASI INSTRUMEN PERFORMANCE TEST

A. Identitas
 Nama : Elvina azaria
 Judul Penelitian : Efektivitas Penggunaan Game Edukatif *Wordwall* Berbasis Montessori Terhadap Keterampilan Membaca Permulaan Siswa SD di Sanggar Bimbingan Pandan Kuala Lumpur Malaysia
 Validator : Amin Basri, S.Pd., M.Pd.

B. Petunjuk
 a) Bapak/Ibu dimohonkan memberikan penilaian dengan cara memberi tanda (✓) pada kolom skor penilaian sebagai berikut :
 4 = Sangat Baik
 3 = Baik
 2 = Cukup Baik
 1 = Kurang Baik
 b) Bila Menurut Bapak/Ibu validator lembar performance tes kemampuan membaca perlu ada revisi, mohon ditulis pada bagian komentar dan saran guna perbaikan.

No	Aspek yang Divalidasi	Penilaian			
		4	3	2	1
1	Mengenal Huruf Membaca 100 huruf yang telah disiapkan (huruf besar dan kecil), serta disusun secara acak. Seratus huruf didominasi huruf- huruf yang sering dijumpai atau tidak asing bagi peserta didik.	✓			
2	Membaca Suku Kata membaca 50 suku kata yang telah disiapkan (terdiri atas suku kata terbuka	✓			

dan tertutup) secara acak.

3	Membaca Kata Tak Bermakna Membaca 50 kata tidak bermakna.	✓			
4	Membaca Kata Tak Bermakna Membaca 50 kata bermakna	✓			
5	Membaca Cepat Membaca teks, kemudian peserta didik tersebut menjawab pertanyaan yang peneliti berikan berdasarkan teks yang sudah dibacanya.	✓			

Kesimpulan
 Berdasarkan penilaian diatas, lembar performance tes dinyatakan :
 a. Layak digunakan tanpa revisi
 b. Layak digunakan dengan revisi
 c. Tidak layak digunakan

Medan, Februari 2025
 Validator
 Amin Basri, S.Pd., M.Pd.

Figure 1. Validation of Performance Test Students' Beginning Reading Skills by Validator

Then the results of the hypothesis test using the One-Sample Test showed significant results. In the pre-test, the value of $t = 177.193 > 1.89458$ t table with $df = 7$ and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, with a mean difference of 58.00000 or in percentage shows 58%. Meanwhile, in the post-test, the value of $t = 105.417 > 1.89458$ was obtained with $df = 7$ and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, with a mean difference of 84.37500 or in percentage shows 84.37%. From these two results show that there is a significant difference before and after the use of the Montessori-based *Wordwall* educational game on students' early reading skills. Thus the use of the Montessori-based *Wordwall* educational game has a significant influence on improving students' early reading skills. This can be seen in the table below.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test (T-Test)
One Sample Test

Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
pre test	177,193	7	0,000	58,00000	57,2260	58,7740
post test	105,417	7	0,000	84,37500	82,4824	86,2676

Based on the results of the hypothesis test above, it can be concluded that the testing of the pretest action (before the use of Montessori-based educational wordwall games) The level of students' initial reading skills is at a sufficient level if based on the categorization criteria table, namely $58\% \leq 45-64\%$. Then in the post-test results test (after using Montessori-based educational wordwall games) showed that there was a very significant increase in students' initial reading skills where the posttest percentage results were in the good category if based on the value categorization table, namely $84.37\% \leq 65-84\%$.

Discussion

Effectiveness of Using Montessori-Based Educational Wordwall Games

This study demonstrates that the use of Montessori-based *Wordwall* educational games is effective in enhancing early reading skills among elementary school students. The results of the statistical analysis, which showed significance at the 0.05 level, confirm a strong relationship between the intervention (use of educational games) and the students' reading abilities. These findings suggest that the implementation of interactive, game-based learning methods can positively impact the development of foundational literacy skills in young learners.

The Montessori method encourages children to learn through direct, hands-on, and interactive experiences. This approach aligns well with the use of *Wordwall*, an educational platform that provides an engaging and interactive learning environment. Through visual manipulation, word games, and cognitively stimulating exercises, students are able to learn more effectively. Montessori education emphasizes the importance of developmentally appropriate instruction and allows learners the freedom to progress at their own pace—principles that are closely reflected in the flexible and playful nature of *Wordwall* activities.

The use of interactive *Wordwall* games enables students to engage in learning in a manner that is both enjoyable and consistent with Montessori principles. Learners are presented with tasks that are challenging yet enjoyable, which enhances their motivation and engagement in the learning process. The experience of learning through *Wordwall* games fosters early reading skills in a more natural and meaningful way, as students repeatedly engage in word and syllable recognition activities. This repetition, combined with the interactive nature of the games, ultimately strengthens their foundational reading abilities.

Improved Beginning Reading Skills

Early reading skills are a critical indicator in the development of children's literacy. Based on the research findings, students who participated in learning activities using *Wordwall* educational games demonstrated significant improvement in their mastery of early reading skills, including the ability to recognize letters, construct words, and read simple syllables.

This improvement can be attributed to the Montessori approach, which emphasizes learner autonomy and encourages children to explore through multisensory games and activities. The interactive features of *Wordwall*—such as word-matching games, letter arrangement tasks, and repeated syllable exercises—provide strong phonological stimuli that help reinforce students' foundational literacy skills. The use of engaging colors, interactive visuals, and instant feedback from the games also instills a sense of accomplishment, further motivating students to continue learning.

Moreover, the Montessori method emphasizes personalized learning, wherein teachers act as supportive facilitators who guide students according to their individual developmental needs. *Wordwall* games support this approach by offering varying levels of difficulty, allowing students to learn at their own pace and according to their

current skill level. This adaptability makes *Wordwall* an effective tool for differentiated instruction, ensuring that each student receives a learning experience tailored to their unique capabilities and progress.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of Montessori-based Wordwall educational games is effective in improving early reading skills among elementary students. This conclusion is supported by the results of the hypothesis test, which indicate a statistically significant effect in the post-test phase. The t-test value was 105.417, which is greater than the critical value of 1.89458 ($df = 7$), and the significance value was 0.000, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. Furthermore, the mean difference was 84.375, corresponding to a percentage increase of 84.37%. These results confirm that the integration of Montessori-based Wordwall educational games has a substantial and positive impact on students' early reading abilities. Therefore, it can be affirmed that this approach is an effective method for enhancing foundational literacy skills in first-grade elementary students at Sanggar Pandan Guidance, Kuala Lumpur.

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