

Mapping Joyful Art Learning Strategies to Strengthen Students' Deep Understanding in Elementary Schools

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31603/tarbiyatuna.v16i2.15389>



ABSTRACT

Article Info:

Submitted:

20/10/2025

Revised:

28/11/2025

Published:

31/12/2025

Developing students' deep understanding through meaningful learning experiences requires instructional approaches that are both engaging and emotionally supportive. This study aims to map the implementation of joyful art learning strategies in elementary schools and analyze how such strategies contribute to students' deep understanding. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis of instructional materials. The data were analyzed through thematic coding to identify patterns in learning activities and their cognitive implications. The findings reveal that joyful art learning is implemented through experiential activities, creative exploration, collaborative tasks, and reflective discussions, which encourage students to express ideas, interpret meaning, and construct conceptual understanding. These strategies were found to strengthen deep understanding by promoting active engagement, imagination, and higher-level cognitive processes. However, the implementation still faces challenges, including insufficient learning time, limited art learning facilities, and variability in teachers' pedagogical competence. This study highlights the importance of integrating joyful learning principles into art education to create emotionally supportive learning environments and to enhance cognitive depth in elementary students.

Keywords: Joyful Art Learning; Deep Understanding; Experiential Learning; Elementary Education; Learning Engagement

ABSTRAK

Penguatan *deep understanding* melalui pengalaman belajar yang bermakna memerlukan pendekatan pembelajaran yang menarik dan mendukung kondisi emosional siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memetakan implementasi strategi pembelajaran seni berbasis joyful learning di sekolah dasar serta menganalisis kontribusinya terhadap penguatan *deep understanding* siswa. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui observasi kelas, wawancara guru, dan analisis dokumen perangkat pembelajaran. Data dianalisis menggunakan pengodean tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola aktivitas belajar dan implikasi kognitifnya.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran seni berbasis joyful learning diimplementasikan melalui aktivitas eksperiensial, eksplorasi kreatif, kerja kolaboratif, dan diskusi reflektif yang mendorong siswa mengekspresikan gagasan, menafsirkan makna, serta membangun pemahaman konseptual. Strategi tersebut berkontribusi terhadap penguatan deep understanding melalui peningkatan keterlibatan belajar, imajinasi, dan proses berpikir tingkat tinggi. Namun, implementasinya masih menghadapi kendala seperti keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran, sarana pembelajaran seni yang kurang memadai, serta variasi kompetensi pedagogis guru. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi prinsip joyful learning dalam pembelajaran seni untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung secara emosional dan memperdalam capaian kognitif siswa sekolah dasar.

Kata-kata Kunci: Joyful Learning; Deep Understanding; Pembelajaran Seni; Sekolah Dasar; Keterlibatan Belajar

1. INTRODUCTION

Art learning plays an important role in developing creativity, emotional intelligence, and character formation among students (Kusnanto & Frima, 2022). However, current art learning practices in many elementary schools in Indonesia tend to emphasize technical skills, such as drawing or craft making, rather than cultivating reflective, affective, and conceptual understanding (Gustiawan et al., 2023). This condition results in learning processes that are largely product-oriented and provide limited opportunities for students to experience meaning and develop deeper insights into art (Ayvazo, 2019). Other studies indicate that a substantial proportion of art learning models fail to achieve deep understanding because they rely heavily on repetitive demonstrations and teacher-centered instruction, particularly lecture-based approaches (Hu, 2024). As a result, students may acquire technical proficiency but remain limited in critical reflection, emotional engagement, and creative expression (Anderson-Patton, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to map and examine learning models that integrate joyful, reflective, and experiential dimensions in order to support students' holistic development. A key problem in elementary art education lies in the absence of in-depth and reflective approaches, as instruction remains predominantly focused on technical mastery and surface-level enjoyment. In response to this issue, this study seeks to identify and describe a more comprehensive art learning model that incorporates reflective, affective, and conceptual dimensions, as well as to examine indicators of the limitations of joyful art learning practices in elementary schools based on model implementation and students' creative and emotional outcomes.

In schools, arts education is still positioned as an isolated subject, separate from general learning areas. This separation of learning objectives limits the potential to support students' holistic development and deeper conceptual understanding (Hommel, 2024). Studies on the integration of arts-based learning often highlight its contribution to motivation and active participation; however, they have not sufficiently examined how

such integration supports deep understanding and critical thinking (Bowen, 2023). Gaps in arts learning in elementary schools indicate that art is often valued solely for its entertainment or aesthetic functions, rather than as a medium for psychomotor, cognitive, and reflective learning (Chen, 2022). The Joyful Learning approach emphasizes that arts education should not be confined to theoretical or practical skill development alone, but can be meaningfully integrated into various general subjects at the elementary level (Hermawati et al., 2024). Such integration is necessary not only to make learning more engaging, but also to connect emotional involvement, creativity, and experiential skills with conceptual mastery. Through this process, students are better positioned to achieve deeper understanding of learning materials.

Recent studies on arts education further reveal that many art-based learning approaches remain formalistic, with a strong focus on student engagement and enjoyment rather than reflective or metacognitive activities (Oubibi, 2024). Within this context, the Joyful Learning approach becomes particularly relevant, as it aligns artistic practice with meaningful learning experiences by positioning enjoyment as a pathway toward deeper understanding (Abrori & Lutfiana, 2025).

In the context of art education, the JoyFull Learning approach describes a model that introduces processes in understanding art and learning outcomes (Dumiyati et al., 2025). The approach will be aligned with teaching techniques, processes, and art outcomes, while also focusing on developing a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of the artwork itself. Five main indicators that are related to art concepts include elaboration and analysis skills, knowledge transfer, and reflection and self-evaluation, which can be seen from the application of this model (Fujiawati et al., 2020). Furthermore, the integration of values and context is also an important part of this approach, which allows students to connect art with other aspects of their lives (Daryanti, 2020).

A deep learning approach is capable of creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere while integrating emotional engagement, creativity, and social interaction as pedagogical dimensions that strengthen students' cognitive awareness and reflective capacity (Maknun & Niswar, 2025). Through this process, students develop a deeper understanding of concepts, values, and socio-cultural contexts embedded in learning experiences (Ananda et al., 2017). Enjoyable learning constitutes a core element of humanistic and active learning, as it values students' learning experiences and supports the development of positive and meaningful emotions (Khotimah et al., 2025). Within arts education, the Joyful Learning approach can be applied across multiple artistic domains, including visual arts, music, dance, and drama (Sukoyo et al., 2024). Accordingly, learning activities should be deliberately designed to engage students cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically through processes of creative exploration, collaboration, and self-reflection (Gustiawan et al., 2023).

In elementary schools, the application of playful learning in art subjects is often understood simply as a fun and enjoyable process through games, free expression, or creative exercises without clear conceptual objectives. This results in learning objectives that do not lead to deep understanding. As a result, although students appear enthusiastic, their mastery of art principles, the creative process, the selection of techniques, and the ability to explain the meaning of artworks often do not develop systematically. Learning activities often stop at the level of independent product creation, not at the understanding of the process but rather at the rationale for its use and creation (Alfrey, 2025). Many teachers lack a background in art and tend to conduct assessments without considering the core aspects of art learning (Birsa, 2022). Through the JoyFull Learning art learning model, we can describe a creative and enjoyable approach that encompasses emotional engagement, creativity, social interaction, appreciation of artworks, learning in a supportive environment, as well as experiential learning and in-depth understanding (Sutrina et al., 2025). While extensive research has been conducted on the application of JoyFull Learning in arts education, there are still gaps in the integration of concepts and mapping of outcomes into everyday practices in elementary schools. Most studies focus more on the development of practical skills and techniques that see the results of the work, while the reflective and conceptual dimensions of arts learning are often neglected. Therefore, this study contributes to describing and mapping an arts learning model that refers more to in-depth understanding, as well as providing perspectives on assessment in the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. This research is expected to fill this gap by providing new findings on how joyful arts learning can be introduced more effectively in the curriculum, especially in supporting arts learning in Islamic elementary education environments.

This research is important because art instruction in elementary schools often follows a traditional pattern that emphasizes teaching techniques with cognitive outcomes, while in-depth learning experiences are still not maximized. This condition often results in the learning process not producing a deep understanding of how art is used as a learning medium, because students only follow instructions without experiencing, interpreting, and reflecting on the enjoyable process of creating works. At the stage of deep understanding, being able to reconstruct, rather than memorize, indicates that learning that ignores the emotional and creative aspects tends to fail to build a deeper understanding regarding the use of art. Therefore, JoyFull Learning is important to study, as an answer to the need for learning that is not only fun, but also meaningful, and encourages strengthening student understanding (Hasibuan et al., 2025).

The Joyful Learning-based arts learning mapping developed in this study is designed to guide students toward achieving a deep understanding of arts education. Conceptually, this study proposes a framework of interrelated Joyful Learning indicators as a basis for assessing both the quality of arts learning and the depth of students'

understanding. These indicators include emotional engagement, creativity and expression, social–collaborative interaction, appreciation of artworks, a supportive and enjoyable learning environment, and experiential learning that is pleasurable while simultaneously deepening understanding (Maknun & Niswar, 2025).

This study opens new opportunities for applying Joyful Learning–oriented designs in arts education practice, while also offering fresh perspectives on how enjoyable art teaching techniques can be integrated with in-depth learning processes in schools. Art and nature-based elementary schools in Yogyakarta, namely *Sanggar Anak Alam* (SALAM), SDIT Alam Nurul Islam, and *Sekolah Seni Alam Nusantara*, provide learning environments in which art and nature are positioned as core components of the educational process. The selection of these schools as research sites was based on methodological considerations, as they consistently integrate art and nature as pedagogical practices within their curricula. These three schools implement arts learning within an ecosystem and curriculum framework that enables the measurement of teacher involvement, student learning satisfaction, and depth of understanding through observation instruments and questionnaire-based assessments. This is supported by learning documentation that captures both artistic practice and art appreciation activities conducted in school settings. Consequently, these schools offer a relevant and appropriate context for analyzing how enjoyable learning experiences contribute to the development and mapping of students' deep understanding of arts learning at the elementary level in Yogyakarta. Furthermore, this study highlights the contribution of the Joyful Learning model in promoting holistic arts education and supporting character development within the broader context of elementary school education (Imron et al., 2024).

Based on theoretical studies, art learning in elementary schools still faces a gap between the goals of developing creativity, emotional engagement, and conceptual understanding, with learning practices that tend to be oriented towards technical skills and final products. Although the Joyful Learning approach has been widely adopted to enhance a pleasant learning atmosphere and student participation, its application in art learning has not been systematically directed at building deep understanding through reflection, meaningful experiences, and the integration of artistic values. Previous research generally places the joy of learning as the ultimate goal, rather than as a pedagogical mechanism that connects emotional engagement, creativity, and metacognitive processes. Therefore, this study is important to map the indicators of Joyful Learning in art learning that are able to bridge the joy of learning with the achievement of deep understanding of students.

Beyond these educational gaps, it is important to note that the position of arts education carries additional significance in Islamic schooling traditions, where learning is not solely directed at skill acquisition, but also at holistic personal development. Within the Islamic education tradition, artistic learning is not merely associated with aesthetic

pleasure, but also with the cultivation of character, adab, and reflective appreciation values that are central in *tarbiyah*-oriented schooling. Beauty (*al-jamāl*) and creative expression have long been recognized within Islamic civilization as pathways to nurture sensitivity, emotional balance, and moral refinement. This perspective provides a pedagogical rationale for positioning art not only as an extracurricular practice but as a meaningful educational medium that supports holistic development in elementary learners.

2. METHOD

The research methodology used is a quantitative descriptive study based on mapping, which aims to describe the level of implementation of art learning with the JoyFull Learning approach in schools (Bandem, 2001). The quantitative descriptive approach is used to process numerical data from students' perceptions of the implementation of JoyFull Learning through descriptive statistical analysis that includes percentages and score categorization. The goal is to map and describe the level of implementation of art learning with the JoyFull Learning approach towards in-depth understanding. Data were collected through observations and questionnaires, and supported by documentation that analyzes students' perceptions of art learning, with a focus on measuring JoyFull Learning indicators and students' in-depth understanding. The results of the analysis include a comparison of achievement profiles between indicators and conclusions regarding the contribution of JoyFull Learning to students' in-depth understanding.

Research sample determined with purposive sampling, involving 37 students from 3 (three) school-based art and nature in Yogyakarta, namely SALAM school (16 students), SDIT Alam Nurul Islam (14 students), and Alam Nusantara Arts School (7 students). Instruments study in the form of a questionnaire, Likert scale, which was developed based on the theory of JoyFull Learning and understanding in-depth. Assessment results expert shows coefficient validity content of 0.89, which is above the minimum eligibility limit of 0.80. Therefore, the instrument was considered valid. Reliability analysis was conducted using SPSS software through item-total correlation to ensure internal consistency among the questionnaire items. The results indicated that all Joyful Learning indicators were reliable and suitable for analyzing students' perceptions of deep understanding in arts learning. Additional evidence data triangulation was performed through observation, documentation of student activities, and interviews structured with teachers and students, to strengthen the interpretation results, quantitative and explanatory difference level achievements indicators. To strengthen the interpretation of quantitative findings, data triangulation was carried out through classroom observations, documentation of students' learning activities and creative works, and structured interviews with teachers and students. Documentation used as proof for seeing

work creatively in learning art through the JoyFull learning. Through a study capable answer problem main problem in an empirical, namely How mapping JoyFull Learning about understanding deep students in learning art in school base. Instrument research was developed in accordance with the theory JoyFull Learning and the variables explained in the table instrument grid below. To empirically address the main research question on how JoyFul Learning shapes students' in-depth understanding in arts education, the research instrument was developed based on the theoretical dimensions of the JoyFul Learning framework. These dimensions were then operationalized into measurable variables and translated into questionnaire items used in the Likert-scale instrument. The specification of variables, indicators, and item distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Learning grid instrument art based *JoyFull* Learning

No	Indicator	Example Statement	Question Amount	Theory
1	Involvement Emotional	1) "I feel excited every time I take part in art activities." 2) "Learning art makes me feel more confident." 3) "I enjoy every process of creating art."	3	(Liu, 2022)
2	Creativity and Expression	1) "I am free to express my ideas and feelings through artwork." 2) "The teacher gives me the opportunity to be creative in my own way." 3) "I can find new ways to create artwork."	3	(Starko, 2021)
3	Interaction Social	1) "I often collaborate with friends in art activities." 2) "Discussions with friends help me understand art better." 3) "I value my friends' opinions in the creative process."	3	(Yildiz, 2025)
4	Appreciation Regarding the Work	1) "I feel proud when my work is appreciated by teachers or friends." 2) "I can explain the meaning of the artwork I create." 3) "I appreciate the artwork of other people around me."	3	(Back, 2021)
5	Learning Environment	1) "The atmosphere of learning art at school makes me feel calm and happy." 2) "The teacher creates a classroom atmosphere that supports me to experiment." 3) "The place to learn art at school makes me more focused and relaxed."	3	(Atmojo, 2020)
6	Experiential learning	1) "I learn art by trying out various techniques directly." 2) "Art activities help me understand new things from my own experience." 3) "I can apply my art learning experiences in my daily life."	3	(Nakamura, 2022)
7	Deep understanding.	1) "I understand the reasoning behind each technique or step in creating a work." 2) "I can relate art lessons to life or other lessons." 3) "I am able to explain the meaning and value of the artwork I create." 4) "Art activities help me think more critically and reflectively."	4	(Baig, 2020)

Source: Document Personal

The quantitative framework ensured that data collection and analysis were conducted systematically using statistical procedures, which were subsequently reinforced through descriptive explanations to allow the findings to be generalized within the context of elementary arts education. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to map students' engagement, satisfaction, and deep understanding in arts

learning based on the Joyful Learning approach. Scores for each indicator were calculated using mean values and percentage achievement ($\text{score actual/score maximum} \times 100$). The results were then interpreted using three categorical levels: low (0–30%), sufficient (30–65%), and high (65–100%). This categorization enabled straightforward comparison of achievement profiles across indicators. The threshold of 65–100% was designated as the high category because it represents the attainment of $\geq 65\%$ of the ideal score, which is general show perception positive and strong perception in the context survey education (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). The determination of the boundaries of this category is based on ideal standards that reflect adequate achievement in arts teaching. To provide a clearer overview of how the research was carried out, the methodological process is presented in a flowchart summarizing the stages of determining the research objects, defining variables, developing instruments, distributing questionnaires, and conducting statistical data analysis. This visual representation, Figure 1 illustrates the coherence of the research design and the alignment between data collection and data interpretation.

Source : (Arioen et al., 2023) .

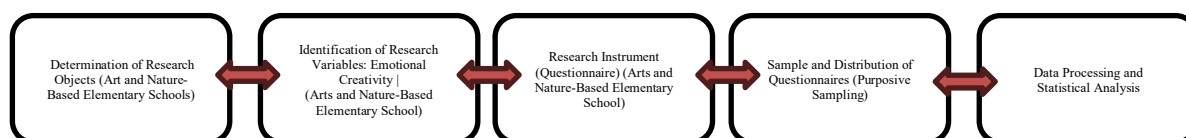


Figure 1. Flowchart of Data Collection, Evaluation, and Analysis Procedures

The research procedures employed observation and documentation of arts learning activities to record the implementation of indicators in an empirical and classroom-based context (Arioen et al., 2023). Observations were conducted using structured assessment sheets designed to capture learning activities related to creativity, imagination, and self-expression. These observations focused on indicators such as participation intensity, the quality of idea expression, and patterns of interaction during the learning process (Hendriyana & Ds, 2022). Evaluation was carried out using two primary instruments. The first was a Likert-scale questionnaire used to measure students' Joyful Learning experiences. The second instrument assessed deep understanding, focusing on students' abilities to explain artistic procedures and techniques, connect their artwork to thematic concepts, and engage in reflective meaning-making. The results from both instruments were systematically mapped to determine levels of achievement and to examine the relationship between Joyful Learning experiences and students' depth of understanding in arts education (Hasanah, 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey results obtained from students in three arts- and nature-based elementary schools in Yogyakarta indicate that all 37 respondents fell into the high

category for the Joyful Learning indicator and simultaneously achieved a high level of deep understanding. Deep understanding was measured through students' abilities to explain artistic processes and techniques, relate their artwork to themes and contextual meanings, and engage in reflective meaning-making. These findings suggest that, for these students, enjoyable learning experiences do not function as isolated outcomes but are closely associated with the attainment of stronger and more meaningful understanding in arts learning. However, the data also reveal the presence of a group of students who demonstrated moderate levels of Joyful Learning, while their deep understanding scores did not consistently reach the high category. This pattern indicates that pleasurable learning experiences alone do not automatically lead to deep understanding unless they are accompanied by reflective, conceptual, and experiential reinforcement in practice. Overall, the results provide a mapped distribution of Joyful Learning achievement and its relationship with multiple indicators of students' deep understanding in arts learning.

a. Emotional Involvement

The first indicator examined in this study concerns students' emotional involvement in arts learning, defined as the extent to which students feel emotionally connected to and actively engaged in the creative process. The findings indicate that 63% of respondents demonstrated a high level of emotional involvement in Joyful Learning-based art activities, as reflected in the mean scores of questionnaire items related to enthusiasm, enjoyment, and sustained participation throughout the learning process. Meanwhile, 37% of respondents fell into the moderate category, and no students (0%) were classified as experiencing low or negative emotional involvement. These results provide empirical evidence of students' emotional participation patterns in elementary arts learning (Bedenlier, 2020).

The survey findings are consistent with prior research showing that arts-based learning environments can enhance emotional engagement by offering spaces for creative expression, thereby supporting students' emotional and social development and facilitating deeper learning experiences (Devi, 2022). To provide a clearer overview of these results, the distribution of emotional engagement scores is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the student emotional engagement survey

Score	Category	Frequency	%
65-100	Pleasant	23	63
30-65	Pretty fun	14	37
0-30	Not fun	0	0

In the context of this research, the majority of respondents who felt that learning art was enjoyable had learning experiences with a prioritizing direct and reflective experience approach, which had a positive influence on perceptions and ways of working in understanding art.

b. Creativity and Expression

Creativity in art is a cognitive and affective process that involves imagination, experimentation, and innovation, enabling students to produce works that are not only aesthetically meaningful but also capable of conveying messages, narratives, or emotional expressions (Hommel, 2024). In art education, creativity is strongly influenced by the design of learning experiences and the clarity of creative concepts applied in classroom practice (Warner, 2025). Teachers therefore play a crucial role in facilitating creativity by guiding students to generate ideas, make artistic decisions, and reflect on the meaning embedded in their work. At the elementary school level, creativity-oriented learning programs have been shown to contribute positively to students' creative achievement. As an emotionally engaging process, creativity supports art learning that is both enjoyable and purposeful, allowing students to deepen their creative experiences in a structured and meaningful way (Hay, 2025).

Survey results related to the indicators of creativity and expression reveal varied levels of student achievement, as presented in Table 3. A total of 19 students (52.94%) were classified in the high creativity category, with scores ranging from 65–100, indicating frequent engagement in idea generation and exploratory artistic activities. Meanwhile, 13 students (35.29%) fell into the moderate creativity category (scores of 30–65), suggesting that creative expression and initiative were present but not yet consistently demonstrated. In contrast, 5 students (11.76%) were categorized as low in creativity (scores of 0–30), reflecting limited ability to express ideas and minimal variation during the artistic process. Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of students demonstrated a high level of creativity and expressive capacity in art learning. Nevertheless, a proportion of students still requires further support to strengthen expressive skills and creative exploration. The detailed distribution of creativity and expression levels is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Creativity and Expression

Score	Category	Frequency	%
65-100	Often Creative	19	52.94
30-65	Rarely creative	13	35.29
0-30	Not Creative	5	11.76

(Source: Personal Document)

c. Social Interaction

The survey findings indicate that most students perceived arts learning as providing meaningful opportunities for social interaction. These interactions occurred not only within the classroom but also through activities that engaged peers, teachers, and the surrounding environment beyond the school setting. Such experiences suggest that arts

learning functioned as a social space in which collaboration, communication, and shared creative processes could develop. To present these patterns more clearly, the distribution of student responses regarding social interaction in arts learning is shown in [Table 4](#).

[Table 4](#). Social Interaction

Score	Category	Frequency	%
65-100	Often	14	40.39
30-65	Seldom	18	47.85
0-30	Never	5	11.76

(Source: Personal Document)

As shown in [Table 4](#), 14 students (40.39%) reported that they often engaged in social interaction during arts learning activities, indicating frequent collaboration and communication with peers, teachers, and the surrounding environment. Meanwhile, 18 students (47.85%) stated that they were seldom involved in social interaction related to art activities, suggesting that opportunities for interaction were present but not consistently experienced. Only 5 students (11.76%) reported that they never engaged in social interaction with teachers or the broader learning environment during arts learning.

d. Appreciation of Artworks

Art appreciation refers to the process of recognizing, valuing, and interpreting the quality, meaning, and significance of artistic works ([Marfil-Carmo, 2023](#)). It involves developing a deeper understanding of the elements embedded within a work of art and how these elements communicate through emotional and perceptual dimensions, including affective support ([Lee, 2024](#)). The survey results on art appreciation indicators revealed that most students perceived positive recognition from their teachers regarding the artworks they produced. This suggests that constructive acknowledgment and feedback play an important role in enhancing students' engagement and self-confidence during creative activities. To provide a clearer overview of students' responses, the distribution of survey results related to art appreciation is presented in [Table 5](#).

[Table 5](#). Appreciation of Work

Score	Category	Frequency	%
65-100	Often	22	61.03
30-65	Seldom	13	29.41
0-30	Never	2	9.56

(Source: Personal Document)

[Table 5](#) shows that 22 students, or approximately 61.03% of the total respondents, felt that they often received enthusiasm and encouragement from their teachers to continue creating, while 13 students, or approximately 29.41%, stated that they rarely received encouragement, and 2 students, or approximately 9.56%, stated that they never

received encouragement from teachers who participated in education. Appreciation of students' artwork is an important factor in the JoyFull approach (Blanco, 2023).

e. Environmental Learning

The observations indicated that a learning environment supported by open spaces, adequate artistic media, and peer social support enables students to engage in experiential learning processes. Such conditions encourage students to understand art reflectively and contextually. In this regard, a positive learning environment does not merely create a pleasant atmosphere but also contributes to the development of deeper understanding, as students are able to relate their personal and exploratory experiences to the art concepts being taught. To complement these findings, survey data were collected to map students' perceptions of the art learning environment. The survey results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Survey results on environmental arts learning

Score	Category	Frequency	%
65-100	Support	27	72.32
30-65	Sufficient Support	8	18.12
0-30	Does not support	2	9.56
(Source: Personal Document)			

The results of measurements of the art learning environment indicators show that most students consider the learning atmosphere in their school to be conducive and supportive of the creative process. Based on the table above, 27 students (72.32%) are included in the supportive category, 8 students (18.12%) in the fairly supportive category, and 2 students (9.56%) in the unsupportive category. These findings show that the physical, social, and emotional environment of the school plays an important role in building students' sense of comfort, focus, and openness to the art learning process (Campbell, 2024).

Within Islamic educational perspectives, learning that nurtures joy and meaningful experiences is closely linked to the concept of tarbiyah, which emphasizes the gradual cultivation of character, moral sensibility, and self-awareness. Through art-making and reflective dialogue, students demonstrated behaviors associated with tarbiyah values such as patience, perseverance, appreciation of beauty, and respect for others' work. These elements indicate that Joyful Learning may function as a complementary pedagogical approach for character formation in elementary schools.

f. Learning-Based Experience

The experiential learning approach emphasizes students' direct involvement in the creative process, including in arts education (Tan, 2025). In this approach, students not only learn abstract concepts or theories about art, but also actively participate in artistic creation, observing and exploring the creative process while reflecting on their experiences (L. Huang, 2025). Experiential learning thus measures the extent to which

students are able to apply arts learning beyond the classroom setting, such as at home or in natural environments (Zeng, 2025). Based on the survey findings, most students reported being able to transfer the learning experiences acquired during art lessons into activities conducted at home. The distribution of survey results regarding students' experiential learning is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Results of the student-based learning experience survey

Score	Category	Frequency	%
65-100	Pleasant	22	64.32
30-65	Pretty fun	12	24.05
0-30	Not fun	3	11.64

(Source: Personal Document)

These results indicate that experiential learning in art education not only facilitates the transfer of skills across contexts but also creates reflective spaces in which students integrate personal, social, and creative experiences into deeper meaning-making processes. From the perspective of Islamic education, experiential learning resonates with the tarbiyah paradigm, in which learning is viewed as a gradual process of self-cultivation (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) through experience, reflection, and moral discipline. In this context, art activities that encourage exploration, patience, collaborative dialogue, and appreciation of beauty align with values that Islamic schooling aims to nurture, such as adab, empathy, and reflective awareness. These findings broaden the meaning of Joyful Learning beyond enjoyment, positioning it as a pedagogical approach that may contribute to character formation within Islamic elementary schooling.

The data collected above, in addition to using questionnaires, was strengthened by interviews and documentation to find learning experiences through emotional involvement, creativity, expression, and social interaction. Based on the results of the survey and observations conducted, 22 students 64.32% stated that experience-based learning was enjoyable, 12 students answered quite enjoyable with a value of 24.05% and 11.64% of the total 3 students gave an unpleasant opinion.

The main findings of this study indicate that enjoyable learning experiences in art teaching are closely related to a deeper understanding of art concepts and practices in elementary schools. This is in line with the research objective of mapping how JoyFull Learning-based art learning can improve students' understanding. The results of data collection confirm that enjoyment in learning comes not only from entertaining activities, but also from a sense of meaning, appropriate challenges, freedom of expression, and the function of creating works, all of which support students' emotional and reflective engagement in the art learning process at school.

Findings in the emotional engagement aspect show that the physical, social, and emotional environment of the school plays a significant role in fostering students' sense

of comfort, focus, and openness during the arts learning process (Park, 2025). Conceptually, this can be understood as a learning ecosystem that facilitates a cycle of experience, meaning-making, and reflection. Such experiences trigger reflective processes through discussion, artistic expression, and individual exploration, which in turn support deeper learning.

At SDIT Alam Nurul Islam, nature-based learning approaches further enhanced students' emotional involvement. Activities such as drawing outdoors, playing in the school garden, and creating artworks using natural materials provided positive sensory and affective experiences for students. Interviews with the school principal also confirmed this tendency:

"These nature-based activities are not only interesting for students, but also increase their confidence and emotional involvement. Students are invited to go outside, explore, and create artworks from leaves, soil, or wood. This joyful learning strengthens students' connections with their teachers and allows them to develop ideas and artworks more deeply." To provide visual documentation of these emotional engagement practices, examples of student activities are presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Documentation student in practice involvement emotional

The image above illustrates students engaging in drama activities to gain emotional experiences through the exploration of self via roles, movement, and dialogue. Emotional regulation is one of the key aspects that can be developed through arts education (Cadavid, 2020). Emotional engagement in arts learning constitutes an initial and essential factor in building students' cognitive readiness and supporting the development of deep understanding. Learning experiences that encourage enthusiasm, self-confidence, and a sense of connectedness to artistic activities are more likely to stimulate reflective thinking and sustained engagement (Marfil-Carmo, 2023). Emotional engagement theory further explains that positive emotions enhance concentration, memory retention, and the ability to comprehend the contextual meaning of artistic works (Albrecht, 2021). Thus, emotional engagement observed at SDIT Nurul Salam should not

be understood merely as a pleasant by-product of learning, but rather as a foundational condition that supports students' in-depth understanding of art.

With regard to creativity and expression, these two dimensions represent fundamental elements in arts education (Dhuhri, 2021). In this study, the Joyful Learning approach is understood as a pedagogical space that opens opportunities for students to express ideas and explore creative possibilities freely (Nakamura, 2022). The research findings indicate that opportunities for creativity and expression have not yet been experienced evenly by all students, suggesting variations that depend on the specific learning activities implemented at the practical level. These results highlight the importance of creative freedom and expressive space in enriching learning experiences, while also demonstrating that the availability of such spaces is strongly influenced by pedagogical design and the consistency of teachers' instructional practices (Hommel, 2024). Accordingly, the contribution of this research with respect to creativity and expression lies in affirming that the Joyful Learning approach cannot be evaluated solely at the level of principles or intentions. Instead, it must be assessed through the extent to which creativity and expression are genuinely institutionalized in classroom practice and function as catalysts for reflective thinking and deep learning. At Nusantara Natural Arts School, creativity and expression are integrated as core components of the arts curriculum. As stated by one classroom educator during the interview: "Students at this school are given the freedom to explore their ideas and are educated through various art forms, such as painting, sculpture, and handicrafts. Although they are given freedom to produce their work, students are still guided in applying artistic techniques, including lessons on aesthetics and artistic presentation."

Classroom observations further revealed that students demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm when creating artwork under conditions that allowed creative freedom. Such conditions enable students to develop creative ideas without restrictive limitations, thereby supporting self-expression and originality. Survey findings also indicate that the majority of students perceived themselves as being given adequate freedom for creativity and expression in arts learning. These findings reinforce the view that meaningful creative opportunities play a crucial role in supporting reflective engagement and deep understanding within Joyful Learning-based arts education.

Findings related to the social interaction aspect indicate that it constitutes one of the key pillars of Joyful Learning-based instruction. Arts learning that involves social interaction has the potential to enrich students' learning experiences and broaden their understanding of artistic processes and meanings (Jannah, 2024). However, the survey data reveal that students' social interaction in arts learning has not yet reached an optimal level, as the proportion of students who reported infrequent interaction was higher than those who reported frequent interaction. To contextualize this finding, interviews with teachers at SDIT Alam Nurul Islam were conducted. One teacher explained: "Students

often discuss and share ideas with one another, which enriches their learning experiences during the creative process. Teachers encourage students to work collaboratively, share experiences, and provide feedback to one another, which helps improve the quality of students' artwork. However, social interaction in the broader community environment cannot always be fully monitored."

This condition is influenced by several contextual factors, such as unclear role distribution within group work and the dominance of certain students during collaborative activities. As a result, the social interactions that occur tend to be functional in nature, primarily aimed at completing school assignments with peers and teachers rather than reaching the level required for deep learning practices. Observations at *Sanggar Anak Alam* suggest that Joyful Learning requires social interaction to be transformed into structured activities that intentionally support meaning-making and reflective learning, rather than merely fostering togetherness. At SDIT Alam Nurul Islam, social interaction is strengthened through group activities that involve discussion and collaboration. Nevertheless, in the process of producing artwork, students often still prioritize individual interests, which limits the depth of collaborative engagement. This finding highlights the need for pedagogical designs that balance individual creativity with meaningful collective interaction.

Furthermore, findings related to the appreciation aspect indicate that teachers' practices of recognizing students' artwork are relatively intensive. Most students reported receiving frequent verbal praise during the final stages of art-making activities. These findings confirm that appreciation, when delivered consistently, can effectively support students' motivation and self-regulation. This result aligns with previous studies showing that appreciation combined with constructive feedback, such as those practiced at *Sanggar Anak Alam* has greater potential to foster deep understanding than symbolic praise alone, particularly when students' work is displayed and publicly appreciated through exhibitions. An interview with a teacher at SALAM revealed: "Providing appreciation and positive feedback is very important to maintain students' motivation and strengthen their focus during the creative process. When students work in groups, they are also guided to evaluate their peers' work and offer appreciation."

At SDIT Alam Nurul Islam, appreciation is commonly delivered verbally through motivational expressions, complemented by non-verbal forms such as stickers or star symbols placed on students' artwork. These practices indicate that direct and consistent praise encourages students to remain engaged and strive for deeper learning experiences.

The environmental domain examined in this study is understood specifically as an arts- and nature-based environment that functions as a primary learning resource, rather than merely a physical backdrop. The findings show that although the majority of students perceived their school environment as supportive, variations in learning experiences remain evident. These variations depend largely on spatial design and the

pedagogical practices implemented by teachers. In nature-based arts schools such as Nusantara Natural Arts School and SDIT Alam Nurul Islam, the natural environment is utilized as a space for artistic exploration that encourages confidence, creativity, and self-expression. The distinctive contribution of this research lies in affirming that the natural environment does not merely enhance learning comfort but serves as a pedagogical structure that shapes creative attitudes, situates learning experiences within meaningful contexts, and supports students' deeper understanding of art.

An interview with the principal of SDIT Alam Nurul Islam revealed that "learning in an open and natural environment is capable of nurturing students' creativity and refreshing their ideas, allowing them to work more freely." This statement underscores the importance of experience-based arts learning, which this study conceptualizes as a pedagogical strategy that prioritizes students' lived experiences and their connection to real-life contexts. Such experiential engagement enables learning processes to become meaningful and has the potential to deepen students' understanding (Afifah et al., 2023).

The research data indicate that the majority of students responded positively to experiential arts learning activities conducted both at home and within the community. However, a smaller proportion of students perceived the support for experiential learning as only moderate, suggesting that learning experiences alone do not automatically lead to deep understanding. In this study, deep understanding is associated with indicators of experience-based learning outcomes, including students' ability to explain the creative process, appreciate artistic works, and understand the function and meaning of artworks. Learning practices observed across the three schools demonstrate that experiential learning does not merely foster creativity, but also supports the internalization of artistic concepts, the development of critical thinking skills, and the transfer of lived experiences into conceptual understanding. These findings suggest that meaningful learning experiences serve as a bridge between artistic practice and cognitive engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the discourse on arts education by confirming that the Joyful Learning approach is influenced by five interrelated dimensions that collectively contribute to deep understanding. The contribution of this research lies in its mapping of enjoyable learning and deep understanding as an integrated process involving school readiness, reflective practice, and meaningful learning design at the elementary level. Within the context of Islamic education, these findings are consistent with the principles of tarbiyah, which emphasize the holistic development of reason, emotion, and values through learning that is both enjoyable and profound. The study provides empirical evidence that Joyful Learning can serve as an innovative approach in arts education, enhancing students' holistic understanding of art beyond technical skill acquisition.

The implementation of Joyful Learning in arts and nature based schools in Yogyakarta demonstrates that pleasurable learning experiences can coexist with rigorous

conceptual engagement. Through this approach, students are encouraged not only to enjoy the learning process but also to explore and internalize artistic understanding more deeply. The following sections elaborate on the findings for each indicator employed in this study and discuss their implications for elementary arts education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Joyful Learning plays a significant role in connecting emotional engagement, creativity, artistic expression, social interaction, and appreciation of artworks with students' deep understanding in arts education. The findings indicate that deep understanding in elementary school art learning is not shaped solely by cognitive processes, but rather emerges through the dynamic interplay of experiential, affective, and social dimensions embedded within artistic activities. In this context, joy and positive emotional experiences function as catalytic mechanisms that encourage students to explore ideas, reflect on meaning, and construct understanding through art. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the field of arts education by offering a conceptual explanation of how Joyful Learning supports deeper forms of understanding through the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor processes. This extends existing perspectives that tend to position joy merely as an emotional outcome of learning by demonstrating its pedagogical function in fostering metacognitive awareness, reflective thinking, and meaning-making in arts education. Practically, the findings underscore the importance for elementary school teachers of designing learning environments that are contextual, emotionally supportive, and socially interactive. Such environments enable students to experience art learning as a holistic process, rather than as a technical activity oriented primarily toward the production of final artworks. By emphasizing process, reflection, and engagement, Joyful Learning provides a framework for cultivating meaningful and sustained learning experiences in the arts. Beyond mainstream elementary schooling, these findings are also relevant for Islamic elementary schools and madrasah contexts, where arts learning and character formation are conceptually interconnected. By integrating emotional and experiential dimensions, Joyful Learning aligns with Islamic pedagogical principles that emphasize holistic learner development, including the cultivation of *adab*, reflective awareness, empathy, and an appreciation of beauty (*jamāl*). In this sense, Joyful Learning offers an alternative pedagogical approach that supports *tarbiyah*-oriented character development, rather than focusing exclusively on cognitive achievement. This study is subject to contextual limitations, particularly in terms of sample size and research settings, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research may extend this work through comparative or multi-site designs, mixed-methods approaches, or longitudinal studies across diverse art forms and educational contexts. Such investigations would enable further validation of the proposed model and contribute to the development of more

comprehensive pedagogical frameworks for fostering deep understanding in arts education.

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