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Grade 2 Students Perception of Mathematics Learning

Inayatus Saadah Dalimunthe [1], Safril Abidin Hasibuan [2], Poltak Pembangunan Harahap[3] Almira Amir [4]

[1, 2 ,3] *Universitas Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the perception of grade 2 elementary school students towards mathematics learning from the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The subject of the study was a grade 2 student at a public elementary school in West Lombok Regency. Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and student perception questionnaires. The data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that most students have a positive perception of mathematics learning if the material is delivered in a concrete, contextual, and fun manner. On the cognitive dimension, students understand mathematics as a useful subject in everyday life, although some of the material is still considered difficult. In the affective dimension, students show a sense of joy when learning using games and interesting media, but some students still experience anxiety when facing problems that are considered complicated. In the conative dimension, students with positive perceptions tend to be more active in learning mathematics. Factors that affect student perception include teachers' teaching methods, the use of learning media, and family support. The findings of the study confirm the importance of learning mathematics that is concrete, interactive, and in accordance with the developmental characteristics of elementary school students in the lower grades.

Keywords: Student Perception, Math Learning, Elementary School, Second Grade.

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INTRODUCTION

Mathematics is an important basic subject for the development of logical thinking skills and application in daily life, so the quality of mathematics learning at the elementary school level needs special attention. The success of math learning is determined not only by students' cognitive abilities, but also by their perception of the lesson. Research shows that students' perceptions of learning facilities, family environments, learning methods or media, and learning applications have a real impact on mathematics learning outcomes (Farida et al., 2022). Grade 2 elementary school students, who are at the stage of concrete operational development according

[1]Corresponding Author Name: Inayatus Saadah Dalimunthe; Email: Inayatussaadah13@gmail.com

to cognitive development theory, are strongly influenced by early learning experiences. These early experiences and perceptions can shape their attitudes and beliefs towards math so that if they find math difficult or scary, it has the potential to lower motivation and learning achievement (Ramli et al., 2022). In the field, it is often found that some students consider mathematics to be a difficult and boring subject, and empirical studies at various school levels have noted a positive relationship between positive perceptions of learning methods, media, and facilities and mathematics learning outcomes (Padilah et al., 2020).Therefore, a systematic understanding of the perception of 2nd grade elementary school students towards mathematics learning is very necessary. This is the basis for developing learning strategies that are more active, fun and relevant to the context, so that they can improve learning outcomes and form positive attitudes towards mathematics from an early age.

Mathematics learning in elementary school faces significant challenges because many students are not yet ready to understand abstract mathematical concepts. At this age students need concrete tools and direct experience for concepts to be meaningful therefore, methods that are too symbolic can lead to difficulties in understanding and a decrease in the love of learning (Alsmadi, 2020). Unpleasant or negative learning experiences can trigger math anxiety and lower motivation, attitudes, and self-perception of math skills, which are factors closely related to student learning outcomes and engagement (Miller et al., 2021). Students' perceptions of learning (including perceptions of assignments such as homework, teaching methods, and classroom context) influence their learning behavior and academic achievement. Some studies have shown a relationship between students' perceptions/feelings and achievement, although findings on the strength of this relationship can vary depending on the context and other variables involved (Raoof et al., 2024). Therefore, concrete learning and positive experiences greatly affect students' perceptions, motivation and success, especially in mathematics learning.

According to Jean Piaget, 2nd grade elementary school students are generally at a concrete operational stage where their thinking skills are stronger in the manipulation of concrete objects and logic that can be represented in real terms, so that mathematics learning is easier to understand through visual media, games, and direct experience than abstract explanations (Fahma & Purwaningrum, 2021). If the teaching method is not adapted to these characteristics, for example, if it emphasizes memorization or early abstraction, it has the potential to foster a negative perception of mathematics from an early age because students feel that the material is meaningless or difficult to access (Juardi & Komariah, 2023). Students' perceptions of mathematics learning are multidimensional, including cognitive (way of thinking and understanding concepts), affective (feelings towards the subject), and conative (desire and effort to learn), which together affect their motivation and learning engagement (Novelza et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to conduct research that describes the perception of grade 2 students towards mathematics learning needs to be done by paying attention to the characteristics of students' cognitive development. The goal is that the strategies and learning media developed are in accordance with these stages of development, so that they can minimize the emergence of negative attitudes towards mathematics.

The low interest and motivation of some students in mathematics in elementary school is often seen in the form of passive participation and suboptimal learning outcomes. Research and studies show that positive perceptions of math can increase confidence, engagement in the learning process, motivation to achieve, and ultimately learning achievement, while negative perceptions are associated with anxiety and avoidant behavior during learning (Kholisyoh et al., 2020). The formation of this perception is influenced by teacher teaching practices and learning models that are able to increase interest, motivation, and learning outcomes in mathematics, as well as by learning media, classroom environmental conditions, and parent/family support that are significantly correlated with mathematics achievement (Amalia & Julia, 2022). The 2nd grade phase of elementary school is a crucial period for the formation of an initial perception of mathematics because it is at this early level that the foundation of numeracy skills, concept recognition, and attitude towards subjects is built through intensive teacher guidance and family interaction, so that the perception formed at this stage tends to affect motivation and subsequent learning achievement (Amalia & Julia, 2022). Therefore, it is important for educators to analyze students' perceptions of mathematics teaching and its influencing factors, such as teaching methods, learning media, classroom environment, and family support. It is hoped that the results of the analysis can be the basis for intervention recommendations to increase the interest, motivation and learning outcomes of elementary school students.

Learning is no longer entirely focused on the teacher but rather provides space for students to be active. Student-centered, contextual, and fun learning, so teachers are encouraged to use an approach that links material to real experiences and fosters student learning independence (Sari & Nursyahidah, 2022). In the context of low-grade mathematics learning, concrete approaches and the use of interactive media and everyday contexts have been proven to help students interpret basic concepts and increase motivation and understanding through progression from concrete to abstract according to PMRI/realistic mathematics education principles (Mukwambo et al., 2023). The successful implementation of this approach should be evaluated based on students' perceptions and learning experiences because these perceptions reflect whether learning feels meaningful, fun, and accessible However, research and practice show that there are still groups of students who find math difficult and boring, often due to a lack of contextualization and inappropriate teaching resources or strategies (Sari & Nursyahidah, 2022). Therefore, research that explores the perception of students, especially in grade 2 elementary school, towards mathematics learning is needed to produce empirical evidence. This evidence can support the development and adjustment of learning practices in accordance with the principles of the independent curriculum, especially through concrete, contextual, and interactive media approaches to improve basic understanding and reduce negative perceptions of mathematics.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to describe in depth the perception of grade 2 students towards mathematics learning based on experiences, feelings, and behaviors during the learning process without intervening

in the research subject The research was carried out in a public elementary school in West Lombok Regency with the selection of subjects purposively (grade 2 students) and classroom teachers as supporting informants to obtain more comprehensive data Data collection was carried out through observation of classroom activities and interactions, semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, and simple Likert questionnaires that measure cognitive dimensions (understanding and belief), affective (feelings), and conative (behavioral tendencies) according to the characteristics of low-grade students The validity of the data is improved through source triangulation (comparison of student and teacher data) and method triangulation (observation, interview, questionnaire) Data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman interactive model of data reduction, presentation of narrative data, and drawing conclusions with reduction of selecting relevant data for the focus of the research, presentation in narrative descriptions so that the relationship between findings is clear, and conclusions are drawn based on patterns and findings that emerged during the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Grade 2 Students' Cognitive Perception of Mathematics Learning

Grade 2 students' cognitive perception of mathematics learning is generally quite positive because they begin to associate mathematics with everyday concrete experiences such as numbers, counting, counting money, dividing food, and determining the number of objects. The results showed that this understanding signaled children's early ability to relate mathematical concepts to their real environment, which was in line with the findings that the use of learning media and relevant activities strengthened the linkage between abstract concepts and students' daily experiences (Fahma & Purwaningrum, 2021). Studies in the context of lower grades have emphasized the importance of learning planning that considers the needs of children's cognitive development so that mathematical concepts are not only recognized as symbols and procedures but also have practical meaning to students (Rafiuddin et al., 2024). Students who begin to understand mathematical concepts through concrete daily experiences tend to have a positive perception of mathematics.

Howevwe, some students still consider mathematics to be a difficult subject, especially in materials that require precision such as subtraction, number patterns, and story problems. This difficulty usually increases when the presentation of material is highly abstract without the support of concrete media or contextual examples. The literature suggests that negative perceptions and mathematical anxiety can arise from early exposure to inappropriate teaching of cognitive developmental stages and social myths that portray mathematics as a difficult or frightening field (Trisnani, 2022). The way material is delivered including the use of examples that are close to students' lives and teaching strategies that reduce excessive abstraction plays a significant role in reducing learning barriers and forming more positive cognitive perceptions (Haerunnisa & Imami, 2022). Therefore, the use of contextual learning methods and concrete media is important to reduce anxiety and build more positive cognitive perceptions.

Field observations and empirical evidence support that the use of concrete teaching aids and appropriate learning media facilitates the construction process of

mathematical concepts in children of concrete operational age according to Piaget, so that the improvement of cognitive understanding is directly proportional to the improvement of the perception of mathematics. Research on the development of mathematics learning media for low grades shows the effectiveness of concrete and structured digital media in improving students' cognitive abilities and learning motivation, which in turn encourages a more positive perception of these subjects (Amanda et al., 2023). Thus, students' cognitive perception of mathematics is not innate but is formed through classroom experience. The more the learning experience supports gradual and context-based understanding, the more positive the perception that emerges among students.

Grade 2 Students' Affective Perception of Mathematics Learning

Based on questionnaire and interview data, the majority of 2nd grade students showed a positive affective response to mathematics learning, and students reported feelings of pleasure and enthusiasm especially when learning was presented through games, quizzes, or the use of interesting media. A fun learning experience increases students' engagement and courage to try to solve the problems given by the teacher, so that the affective aspect acts as a driver of active participation in mathematics learning.

On the other hand, some students admit to feeling anxious and afraid when facing problems that are considered difficult or when asked to do them in front of the class; worrying about making mistakes and getting reprimanded by teachers or peers is the source of this anxiety. This condition confirms that negative emotional experiences in the context of learning can reduce students' courage to actively participate and form negative perceptions of mathematics.

Observations show that a supportive and communicative classroom atmosphere can reduce anxiety and increase student confidence; simple appreciation from the teacher, such as praise, applause, or positive motivation, encourages students to be more confident in learning. Conversely, excessive emphasis on the final result and accuracy of answers tends to make students passive and less confident. These findings underscore the close relationship between affective aspects and learning comfort, and that enjoyable math learning not only makes it easier to understand the material but also builds interest and confidence from an early age.

Conative Perception of Grade 2 Students on Mathematics Learning

The conative perception of grade 2 students towards mathematics learning is reflected in the behavioral tendencies that arise during the learning process. Students who have positive perceptions are more active in asking questions, dare to try to solve problems, and show enthusiasm when participating in learning activities and are enthusiastic about exercises in the form of group games or hands-on practice activities (Anzar & Retnawati, 2022). Research shows that attitudes and motivation have a significant effect on mathematics learning outcomesthus, positive attitudes encourage engagement and achievement improvement through active participation and internal motivation (Lestari et al., 2021). In addition, interventions that strengthen self-efficacy such as cognitive behavioral counseling can increase students' confidence in dealing with math and decrease avoidance tendencies, which in turn improves learning engagement (Sopiyah et al., 2020). Thus, a positive conative perception of mathematics can encourage students to be more active, courageous and enthusiastic in

learning, thereby increasing motivation, engagement and mathematics learning outcomes.

On the other hand, students with negative perceptions of mathematics tended to show avoidant behaviors such as paying less attention to the teacher's explanations, being reluctant to do assignments, quickly giving up when experiencing difficulties, and lack of confidence when asked to answer in front of the class This is in line with findings related to math anxiety and negative attitudes that decreased participation and learning outcomes (Safitri et al., 2021). High anxiety interferes with concentration, concept formation, and problem-solving so learning outcomes are not good when anxiety is repeated, which reinforces negative perceptions and avoidance patterns (Sopiyah et al., 2020). Some studies have also linked negative perceptions to conforming behavior phenomena such as skipping or staying away from certain subjects thus, student perception is a contributing factor to less engaged behavior in the classroom (Azmi et al., 2023). Repetitive math anxiety can interfere with concentration and understanding of concepts and reinforce students' negative attitudes towards math.

This indicates that conative perception affects student involvement in the learning process; therefore, teachers need to design learning experiences that provide positive experiences. For example, the use of collaborative methods, math games, practical activities, and approaches that strengthen self-efficacy so that students feel courageous, motivated, and active in learning mathematics (Anzar & Retnawati, 2022). Approaches that reduce anxiety and build motivation and independence can increase student participation and achievement therefore, efforts to improve conative perception are an important part of the design of mathematics learning in the lower grades (Lestari et al., 2021). Therefore, positive, collaborative, and learning that can increase motivation, courage and self-efficacy is needed to reduce anxiety and increase student participation and achievement.

Factors That Affect Students' Perception of Math Learning

Teaching methods affect students' perceptions and learning outcomes in mathematics. A concrete, interactive, and game-based approach tends to form a positive perception, whereas monotonous lectures increase boredom. The Realistic Mathematics Education/PMRI approach which links mathematical concepts with real-world contexts has also been reported to reduce learning difficulties and increase student engagement by emphasizing the construction of meaning by active students (Mustika et al., 2020). In addition, the technology-mediated Problem Based Learning model shows effectiveness and positive perception of more interactive learning and motivates students (Pratama & Ramadhan, 2021). The combination of these findings supports the claim that a variety of methods involving concrete manipulatives, games, real contexts, and technology improves students' perceptions of mathematics (Mustika et al., 2020). Therefore, concrete, interactive, game-based, real-context and technological learning methods have been proven to increase engagement and form positive student perceptions of mathematics learning compared to lecture methods.

The use of visual media and concrete teaching aids can also improve students' understanding of mathematical concepts and attention. Research on the development of media such as KOMET-QR (a QR-based ethnomathematical exploration card)

reports high validity and effectiveness as well as improved learning outcomes when cultural context and digital interactivity are combined, indicating that contextual and interactive media help create positive perceptions of mathematics (Solihin & Rahmawati, 2024). Other studies on concrete manipulative media (props) combined with environmental stimuli such as classical music have reported increased interest, concentration, and learning outcomes, which reinforces the role of concrete media and the learning atmosphere in shaping student perceptions (Dewi et al., 2024). The findings from the PMRI study also confirm the importance of concrete media for students at the concrete operational stage of Piaget so that the material becomes meaningful and understandable (Mustika et al., 2020). Thus, the evidence shows that concrete, visual, interactive, and contextual learning media can increase students' motivation, attention, and positive perception of mathematics.

Family support and classroom atmosphere play important roles in shaping students' confidence and attitudes toward math. Field evidence also indicates that a lack of family support or an unsupportive environment can lead students to view mathematice s as a difficult or frightening subject, while a safe, comfortable, and respectful classroom environment is supported by teachers who use the right methods and media to encourage students' courage and confidence (Dewi et al., 2024). In synthesis, the formation of a positive perception of mathematics requires synergy between appropriate teaching practices, contextual and interactive learning media, family support and a conducive learning environment (Solihin & Rahmawati, 2024). Therefore, family support, positive social interaction, and a safe classroom environment supported by contextual learning methods are very important in shaping students' confidence, involvement and positive perception of mathematics learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research, the perception of grade 2 students towards mathematics learning is not formed from one factor alone. There is a fairly close relationship between cognitive, affective and conative aspects in shaping the way students perceive mathematics in the classroom. Students' emotional experiences can have a considerable influence on their learning process. Children look more enthusiastic in answering questions when learning is packaged through counting games, animated videos or small group activities. In this context, a sense of comfort in the classroom does not seem to be just a complement to learning, but rather an important part that determines a student's courage to learn mathematics. Students who have a positive perception of math tend to show more active learning engagement. They are more daring to ask questions when they do not understand the material, trying to solve problems even though the answers are not necessarily correct. This condition shows that students' perceptions are not only related to the way of thinking, but also affect their motivation and learning behavior in a real way. Therefore, mathematics learning in elementary school should be designed in a concrete, contextual, interactive, and fun way so that students have a positive learning experience from the beginning of their education.

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[2]Corresponding Author Name: Inayatus Saadah Dalimunthe; Email: Inayatussaadah13@gmail.com