

## Students' Perceptions and Contributing Factors in Learning English in Junior High School

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### Abstract

*This study examines the perceptions and factors affecting junior high school students' interest in learning English in rural schools in the Klaten area. English proficiency is crucial for future career prospects and global communication, but gaps in resources and teaching methods present challenges, particularly in rural settings. Data were collected from 32 first-grade students at a junior high school on the outskirts of Klaten, Indonesia, using a structured questionnaire and quantitative research design. The sample was purposively selected to focus on students with low motivation and interest in learning English, offering insights into how demographic factors influence their perceptions. Results revealed that intrinsic factors like confidence and focus were important, while external factors such as the perceived usefulness of English for global communication also significantly impacted student engagement. Statistical analysis highlighted the benefits of formative assessment over summative evaluation in improving learning outcomes. Existing research emphasizes the roles of motivation, teacher influence, social support, learning environments, and digital tools in English language learning, but this study fills a gap by examining junior high students' perceptions in a rural Indonesian context, where localized socio-economic and educational factors are key. These findings stress the need for tailored teaching strategies, resource allocation, and supportive environments to improve student engagement and foster positive attitudes toward English learning. The research aims to contribute to the development of effective and contextually relevant teaching strategies for rural students in Indonesia.*

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## INTRODUCTION

English language learning at the junior high school level plays a pivotal role in developing foundational language skills essential for cross-cultural communication, career opportunities, and global interaction (Getie, 2020; Yuniawati, 2024). In Indonesia, junior high schools aim to equip students with basic competencies in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Muslem et al., 2022). However, the success of this endeavor significantly depends on students' perceptions of English, which influence their motivation, interest, and attitudes

toward the subject (Bangash & Khalil, 2021). Positive perceptions foster enthusiasm and active participation, while negative views often lead to anxiety and reluctance. Factors such as teaching quality, the learning environment, and the use of engaging methods like educational games and interactive sessions are instrumental in shaping these perceptions. Research indicates that incorporating technology and interactive methods can enhance students' confidence and engagement in learning English (Yacob & Md, 2019)

In the context of Klaten, Indonesia, the variability in students' perceptions of English learning is influenced by socioeconomic backgrounds and access to resources. Urban students generally benefit from greater access to educational support, such as private tutoring and internet resources. In contrast, rural students face substantial limitations, leading to disparities in perceptions and learning outcomes (Pohan & Kusumawardany, 2023). Additional factors, including cultural and economic influences and the availability of digital content, further shape how students approach English learning (Yacob & Md, 2019). Teachers play a crucial role in mitigating these challenges by fostering supportive and inclusive learning environments where students feel comfortable practicing the language without fear of making mistakes (Kaneko, 2018).

Despite extensive research on various aspects of English language learning, including the influence of social support, teacher interaction, and digital tools (Derioh & Karim, 2024; Getie, 2020; Mili, 2020), there remains a significant gap in understanding how socio-economic conditions, access disparities, and localized teaching strategies affect junior high school students in rural Indonesia. Existing studies predominantly focus on high school or tertiary students in different geographical and cultural contexts (Rahmaniar et al., 2024; Savaedi & Vahdat, 2017; Susanti et al., 2020). Thus, while research has explored the impact of learning environments and motivational factors, limited attention has been given to the unique challenges faced by students in rural Indonesia, particularly in semi-urban areas like Klaten, where access to resources and educational support can be significantly constrained (Pohan & Kusumawardany, 2023).

Perception plays a crucial role in language learning, shaping how students interpret and respond to their educational experiences. Internal factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and prior experiences, as well as external influences like teaching methods and access to resources, significantly impact students' engagement. Positive perceptions foster higher motivation and active participation, whereas negative perceptions may lead to reduced involvement and slower language acquisition (Muslem et al., 2022; Rosena et al., 2024). In Indonesia, English is introduced as a foreign language under the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning and foundational skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This curriculum incorporates innovative approaches like English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and

formative assessments, aiming to develop critical thinking, creativity, and independence in students (Nadheem et al., 2022; Rahmانيar et al., 2024).

This study aims to bridge the gap in existing research by investigating the localized factors that impact students' engagement with English in rural Indonesia. By exploring the dynamics of socio-economic and contextual factors, the research will provide a deeper understanding of how these elements shape students' learning experiences. The two key research questions guiding this study are: (1) How do junior high school students in Klaten perceive English language learning? and (2) What factors contribute to their interest in learning English? By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to the development of more effective, contextually relevant teaching strategies that cater to students' needs, particularly in rural areas like Klaten. Ultimately, this research seeks to support educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in enhancing the quality of English education in Indonesia, with a focus on creating a more engaging and inclusive learning environment. The primary objective of this study is to investigate junior high school students' perceptions of English language learning in Klaten and identify the factors that influence their interest in learning English. By addressing these objectives, the research aims to provide insights into how socio-economic and contextual factors affect students' motivation and engagement, contributing to the development of more effective and contextually relevant English teaching strategies.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a pure quantitative research method to explore first-grade junior high school students' perceptions and the factors influencing their interest in learning English. The quantitative approach is chosen for its effectiveness in analyzing relationships and trends using numerical data, allowing generalizations about the target population to be drawn (Creswell & J. David, 2018). Using a structured survey instrument, this method systematically measures both internal and external factors that shape students' experiences in learning English, providing a clear and objective understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The study was conducted at a junior high school in a rural area near Klaten, Indonesia, providing a unique context for analyzing the impact of personal and environmental factors on students' interest in learning English. The rural setting highlights disparities in access to resources and the challenges faced by students compared to those in urban environments, providing valuable insights into how these contextual differences shape learning outcomes.

### Research Design

The research utilizes a descriptive quantitative design to investigate the perceptions of first-grade junior high school students regarding English language learning and the contributing factors that influence their interest in the subject. This method is appropriate as it allows for the identification of patterns and relationships in the data through the use of statistical analysis,

providing objective insights into the factors that affect students' engagement with English (Creswell, 2018). By employing structured survey instruments, this method provides a systematic approach to measure both internal and external factors shaping students' English learning experiences.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of the study consists of first-grade students at a selected junior high school located in a rural area near Klaten, Indonesia. The rural setting provides an opportunity to investigate how both personal and environmental factors influence students' interest in learning English in contexts with varying access to educational resources. An open-access sampling method was employed to ensure comprehensive data collection, targeting a minimum of 50 participants, as this sample size is considered adequate to capture significant patterns and provide meaningful statistical analysis.

### **Variables**

This study examines the relationship between various independent and dependent variables. The independent variables include both internal and external factors. Internal factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward learning English are critical in shaping students' willingness and effort to engage with the language. External factors include teacher support, parental involvement, and access to resources like textbooks and online materials, all of which influence the learning experience. The dependent variable in this study is students' enthusiasm, willingness, and emotional engagement in learning English. This variable serves as the primary outcome, reflecting the students' overall interest and involvement in English language education.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

Data for this study is collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' perceptions and the factors influencing their interest in English learning. The questionnaire consists of two sections: one addressing internal factors and the other focusing on external factors. Each section includes statements scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), which quantifies students' responses. To ensure reliability, Cronbach's alpha will be used to test internal consistency, while pilot testing and expert feedback will be employed to enhance the instrument's validity. Additionally, secondary data, such as school records and previous research, will be analyzed to provide further context and support the study's findings (Khanh & Le, 2023; Yaccob & Md, 2019).

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data will be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, will be used to summarize the students' responses, highlighting trends and patterns in the data. Inferential statistics will include correlation analysis to measure the strength of relationships between the independent variables (e.g., teacher support, motivation) and the dependent variable (learning interest). Linear regression analysis will further explore how internal

and external factors predict students' emotional engagement and enthusiasm for English learning. Statistical software like SPSS will be used for data processing, ensuring precise calculations and model validation.

This study uses both descriptive and inferential statistics to explore factors affecting first-grade junior high school students' interest in learning English, focusing on personal and environmental influences, particularly in rural settings, to improve educational strategies and outcomes.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### *Descriptive Analysis of Students' Perceptions and Learning Outcomes*

The descriptive analysis provides insights into the students' perceptions across three key dimensions, such as internal factors, external factors, and overall enthusiasm, willingness, and emotional engagement.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internal Factors	63	10	19	15.35	1.927
External Factors	63	20	35	27.67	3.685
Students' Overall Enthusiasm, Willingness, and Emotional Engagement	63	25	41	34.59	3.472
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

**The descriptive analysis indicates that respondents have a moderately positive perception of internal factors, reflected in a mean score of 15.35.** The standard deviation of 1,927 indicates that the responses are closely clustered around the mean, reflecting limited variation in students' views on how internal factors influence their learning. **In contrast, external factors show a higher mean score of 27,67, signifying a stronger perception of their impact on students' learning outcomes.** However, the standard deviation of 3,685 highlights a wider spread of responses compared to internal factors. Among the three dimensions, **students' overall enthusiasm, willingness, and emotional engagement demonstrate the highest mean score of 34,59**, indicating a high level of motivation and emotional connection to learning. The standard deviation of 3,472 shows moderate variability, suggesting that while most students share a similar level of engagement, some differences exist in their perceptions. The findings emphasize the significant role of internal and external factors in shaping students' learning experiences, with external factors showing greater variability, and suggest the need for targeted support to address lower engagement levels caused by personal struggles or external stressors.

The findings suggest that while internal factors have a uniform influence on students, external factors and emotional engagement have a more significant and varied impact, highlighting the need for a balanced approach. Interventions should focus on enhancing both internal motivation through self-regulation programs and external support systems like tutoring and counseling. Additionally, fostering a supportive and emotionally engaging classroom environment is crucial to maintaining enthusiasm and participation. Further research is needed to explore the role of emotional engagement in different educational settings to refine strategies for improving learning outcomes.

The gender demographic table indicates that most respondents are female (54,0%), while male respondents make up 46,0%. Any differences in responses or perceptions could potentially be attributed to gender-specific experiences or preferences.

Table 2. Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	F=Female	34	54.0	54.0	54.0
	M=Male	29	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

Gender differences can influence how individuals view certain issues, such as access to opportunities, roles in society, or societal expectations. In this study, the observed gender distribution of 54%-46% ensures that both male and female voices are well represented, allowing for nuanced analysis of potential differences or similarities in perceptions. Based on the results of gender representation in the survey above, there is a comparison of these results with the gender distribution in Klaten Regency based on 2023 data from the Klaten Regency Central Statistics Agency. The survey showed a slightly higher percentage of female respondents (54.0%) compared to 50.86% of women in the general population of Klaten, indicating a slight overrepresentation of women in the sample compared to the actual population distribution. Conversely, the survey showed a slightly lower percentage of male respondents (46.0%) compared to 49.14% of men in Klaten, indicating a slight underrepresentation of men in the survey compared to their proportion in the general population (BAPS, 2024). This comparison reveals potential biases in gender-specific survey data and suggests future studies to ensure more balanced gender representation, as well as develop gender-sensitive strategies to address gaps in educational access and experiences.

While the socioeconomic background of the respondents is categorized into three distinct levels, with 9,5% belonging to the high occupation scale, 44,4% representing the medium occupation scale, and 46,0% falling under the low occupation scale.

Table 3. Socioeconomic Background

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1= Skala pekerjaan tinggi	6	9.5	9.5	9.5
	2= Skala pekerjaan menengah	28	44.4	44.4	54.0
	3= Skala pekerjaan rendah	29	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The data shows that **most respondents come from the low (46,0%) and medium (44,4%) occupation scales, with only a small portion from the high occupation scale (9,5%)**. The survey results primarily reflect the experiences of individuals from lower and middle socioeconomic backgrounds, with responses potentially highlighting issues such as financial constraints and job security. However, the limited representation of higher socioeconomic groups (9.5%) may restrict the generalizability of their perspectives on access to quality services or advanced opportunities. These findings are in line with global trends highlighted by an International Labor Organization (ILO) report, which shows that informal work is common in low-income and less-educated sectors. The study reveals that the majority of respondents (90.4%) from low and middle employment scales, reflecting economic realities in developing countries, face challenges like financial constraints and job insecurity, with informal sector workers being particularly vulnerable, indicating the need for further research on mobility barriers and support for these groups. The uniqueness of this finding lies in the exploration of how lower socio-economic groups prioritize basic needs, while groups with higher occupational scales (9.5%) focus on advancement opportunities, thus showing a clear gap (ILO, 2018). The smaller percentage of respondents from high employment scales offers limited insights into the needs of wealthier students, particularly regarding access to advanced opportunities and quality services. Educational interventions should focus on bridging the gap for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds by providing free resources and support systems, while also addressing the unique needs of higher-income students to ensure equal opportunities for all.

In the demographic section of student background, a striking disparity is observed in the urban-rural distribution, where 92,1% of respondents are from rural areas, compared to only 7,9% from urban settings. Urban respondents, who are a smaller proportion, may show different perceptions due to differences in infrastructure, lifestyle, or access to services compared to rural respondents.

Table 4. Urban or Rural Setting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1=Urban	5	7.9	7.9	7.9
	2=Rural	58	92.1	92.1	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The dominance of rural respondents (92,1%) suggests that the findings are more reflective of rural experiences. Urban respondents, though fewer in number, may offer differing views due to better access to infrastructure and education. While rural respondents, particularly in Klaten, face unique challenges like geographic isolation and limited resources, highlighting the need for further research on rural-urban educational disparities. These findings align with the rural-urban divide discussed by Coombs, Campbell, and Caringi (2022), highlighting the rural-urban divide, particularly in access to healthcare, education, and technology, with rural respondents (92.1%) facing more significant challenges due to limited infrastructure and resources (Coombs et al., 2022). These disparities emphasize the need for tailored educational policies that address rural-specific issues such as digital access, transportation, and teacher training. Future research and policy should focus on bridging the rural-urban gap by improving infrastructure, increasing access to technology, and providing targeted teacher training in rural areas to ensure equal opportunities for all students.

The demographic breakdown provides valuable insights into the composition of the sample population and sets the stage for understanding how different groups perceive the subject of study. Gender, socioeconomic background, and urban/rural settings each represent distinct lenses through which issues are viewed.

The learning outcome table below provides descriptive statistics for two assessment categories, namely **Summative Mid-Semester Assessment** and **Daily Tests**, based on a sample of 32 students.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Asesmen Sumatif Tengah Semester	32	60	90	68.34	7.597
Ulangan Harian	32	70	85	80.53	5.358
Valid N (listwise)	32				

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)



The Summative Mid-Semester Assessment results reveal that the minimum score was 60, the maximum score was 90, and the mean score was 68,34. **This average score indicates that the average student scored slightly above the passing grade, assuming a common passing grade is 60 or 65. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 7,597 indicates a moderate variation in student performance.** The range of scores from 60 to 90 highlights a noticeable gap, with some students excelling while others struggled to meet the minimum requirements. In contrast, **the Daily Tests yielded higher overall performance. The minimum score was 70, the maximum score was 85, and the mean score was 80,53.** This significantly higher mean indicates that students generally performed better in daily evaluations compared to the summative assessment. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 5,358 suggests more consistent performance among students, with scores clustering closer to the mean. The narrower range of scores, from 70 to 85, implies fewer disparities in performance levels.

This analysis reveals that **students perform better in daily quizzes than in summative assessments**, with the former offering lower stress levels and more focused content. The variability in summative assessments highlights the challenges students face due to the broader scope and higher stakes. The gap in minimum scores (70 in daily quizzes vs. 60 in summative) suggests that some students struggle with comprehensive evaluations despite consistent performance in smaller tests. To address this, educators should prioritize formative assessments while incorporating targeted support for students through review sessions, practice exams, and stress management strategies to enhance both learning progress and preparation for high-stakes assessments.

#### *Internal and External Factors Influencing Perceptions and Learning Outcomes*

The dependent variable, "Students' Overall Enthusiasm, Willingness, and Emotional Engagement" is influenced by independent variables representing intrinsic motivators or internal factors.

Table 6. Correlations

		Motivated to Study English	Focus on Learning English	Feel Confident to Learn English	Anxiety in Learning Motivates to Practice	Students' Overall Enthusiasm, Willingness, and Emotional Engagement
Motivated to Study English	Pearson Correlation	1	.114	.194	.061	.246
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.373	.127	.635	.052
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Focus on Learning	Pearson Correlation	.114	1	.080	.036	.253*

English	Sig. (2-tailed)	.373		.531	.778	.045
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Feel Confident to Learn English	Pearson Correlation	.194	.080	1	.144	.435**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	.531		.259	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Anxiety in Learning Motivates to Practice	Pearson Correlation	.061	.036	.144	1	.375**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.635	.778	.259		.002
	N	63	63	63	63	63
Students' Overall Enthusiasm, Willingness, and Emotional Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.246	.253*	.435**	.375**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.052	.045	.000	.002	
	N	63	63	63	63	63
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The variable "Motivated to Study English" shows a positive but non-significant correlation ( $r = 0.246$ ,  $p = 0.052$ ) with the dependent variable. While the correlation narrowly misses the conventional threshold for significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), the result suggests that **students who are motivated to study English tend to exhibit moderate enthusiasm and emotional engagement**. Although not statistically strong, this finding indicates the importance of nurturing motivation through strategies like goal-setting and personalized learning pathways. **A significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.253$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ) is observed between the variable "Focus on Learning English" and the dependent variable**. This indicates that students who can maintain focus on English learning are more likely to feel emotionally engaged and willing to participate in the learning process. **A strong, statistically significant correlation was observed between 'Feel Confident to Learn English' and the dependent variable ( $r = 0.435$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )**." This finding underscores that confidence plays a crucial role in driving emotional engagement and active participation. **The variable "Anxiety in Learning Motivates to Practice" shows a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.375$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) with the dependent variable**. This indicates that moderate levels of anxiety, when

perceived constructively, can act as a motivator for practice, ultimately enhancing students' engagement and emotional connection to the learning process. **The strongest positive relationship is found between "Feel Confident to Learn English" and the dependent variable, highlighting confidence as a pivotal internal motivator.** Additionally, the significant positive impact of focus and anxiety management on engagement emphasizes the importance of addressing students' emotional and psychological needs.

This analysis highlights the importance of structured activities, minimizing distractions, and fostering a conducive learning environment to enhance student focus and engagement. However, further research is needed to explore which teaching strategies or classroom settings most effectively promote sustained attention, such as active learning or structured content delivery. Additionally, while self-confidence and anxiety management significantly influence student participation, the dynamic interaction between these factors remains underexplored. Future research could investigate how targeted interventions, like peer feedback or low-risk speaking exercises, can improve self-confidence and emotional engagement. Educators should integrate strategies that target internal motivators, such as confidence-building activities, manageable challenges, and anxiety reduction, to enhance student motivation and engagement.

The analysis evaluates the influence of external factors (independent variables) on the dependent variable, **Students' Overall Enthusiasm, Willingness, and Emotional Engagement**, using regression analysis.

Table 7. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.718 <sup>a</sup>	.515	.453	2.567

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The model summary indicates that **the R-value is 0,718, showing a strong positive relationship between the predictors (external factors) and the dependent variable.** The **R Square (0,515)** reveals that 51,5% of the variation in students' overall engagement can be explained by the external factors included in the model. The **Adjusted R Square (0,453)** accounts for model complexity, showing that the predictors effectively explain approximately 45,3% of the variation. The **standard error of the estimate (2,567)** represents the average deviation of observed values from predicted values. The high explanatory power of external influences like perceptions of English as a communication tool suggests their key role in student engagement, but the remaining variance highlights the need for further research into internal factors and other external variables, such as social influence, institutional support, and cultural exposure, that may interact to form a comprehensive model for enhancing engagement.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	384.850	7	54.979	8.343	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	362.420	55	6.589		
	Total	747.270	62			

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

**The results of the ANOVA analysis confirm the overall significance of the regression model.** With an F-value of 8,343 and a p-value of 0,000 ( $p < 0,05$ ), the model demonstrates that external factors collectively have a statistically significant influence on students' overall engagement. This highlights the importance of examining these predictors to understand their impact on students' enthusiasm, willingness, and emotional connection to learning English.

**Table 9. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.352	2.812		6.170	.000
	English lessons are fun and help students' lives.	.390	.492	.089	.793	.431
	Students feel anxious when asked to speak English in class	.308	.474	.069	.649	.519
	English opens up opportunities to communicate with people from other countries	.836	.370	.253	2.260	.028
	English is interesting to learn because of its very inspiring culture.	.531	.521	.110	1.019	.313
	English lessons help to understand information from foreign films, music and books	1.061	.555	.218	1.912	.061

	Motivation to learn English to master an international language	.928	.520	.230	1.782	.080
	A positive attitude towards English helps students to focus more on learning.	.334	.550	.065	.607	.546

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The coefficients analysis further identifies specific predictors that contribute to this engagement. **The constant value ( $B = 17,352$ ,  $p = 0,000$ ) represents the baseline level of engagement when all external factors are absent.** Among the predictors, **“English opens up opportunities to communicate with people from other countries”** ( $B = 0,836$ ,  $p = 0,028$ ) significantly influences engagement, with a positive Beta coefficient of 0,253. This suggests that students who perceive English as a tool for international communication are more likely to be engaged and enthusiastic. Other predictors, such as **“English lessons help understand information from foreign films, music, and books”** ( $B = 1,061$ ,  $p = 0,061$ ), and **“Motivation to learn English to master an international language”** ( $B = 0,928$ ,  $p = 0,080$ ), **approach significance.** While not statistically significant, these factors demonstrate relatively strong coefficients, indicating their potential to influence engagement indirectly. However, **variables such as positive attitudes, cultural inspiration, and enjoyment of English lessons do not show significant direct effects on engagement ( $p > 0,05$ ).** **The findings highlight the value of emphasizing practical applications of English, such as its role in global communication and access to international media.**

The findings suggest that while cultural elements can enhance student interest, their direct impact on engagement is limited, with stronger influences coming from external motivators like English’s role in global communication. However, the unexplained variance points to the need for further research on internal motivators such as self-confidence and anxiety management, and how cultural and personal factors interact to improve student engagement.

### ***Inferential Analysis of Variable Relationships***

Reliability testing evaluates the consistency of the instrument in measuring the intended variables across different instances.

Table 10. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.835	20

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0,835 indicates that the instrument is reliable and achieves a good level of internal consistency. Performance quality is rated as follows: Excellent ( $\geq 0,9$ ), Good (0,8-0,9), Acceptable (0,7-0,8), dan Poor ( $< 0,7$ ).

Table 11. Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
X1.1	73.59	60.537	.268	.833
X1.2	73.78	58.498	.376	.829
X1.3	73.87	56.790	.427	.827
X1.4	73.83	58.824	.350	.830
X2.1	73.56	57.251	.510	.823
X2.2	73.79	58.328	.424	.827
X2.3	73.95	54.175	.564	.819
X2.4	73.54	57.930	.509	.823
X2.5	73.70	57.601	.544	.822
X2.6	73.57	54.410	.696	.813
X2.7	73.44	58.735	.462	.826
Y1	73.41	59.020	.460	.826
Y2	74.48	54.834	.545	.820
Y3	73.75	56.967	.544	.821
Y4	73.90	57.442	.561	.821
Y5	73.59	59.440	.371	.829
Y6	74.17	69.824	-.397	.872
Y7	73.33	58.742	.383	.829
Y8	73.75	58.580	.447	.826
Y9	73.46	57.059	.536	.822

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

Given the value of 0,835, the results suggest that the 20 items tested exhibit sufficient reliability to capture the construct effectively. **This indicates that the instrument consistently measures the variables with minimal measurement error.**

A high Cronbach's Alpha signifies that the items within the scale are well-correlated and contribute cohesively to measuring the same underlying concept. **However, an alpha that is too high ( $> 0,9$ ) might suggest redundancy among items.** While the current results show a balanced correlation, they highlight the need for periodic item review to maintain relevance and prevent survey fatigue, with further research recommended to test reliability through pilot studies before large-scale use.

Regression analysis reveals key insights into the influence of independent variables (Internal and External Factors) on the dependent variable

(Students' Overall Enthusiasm, Willingness, and Emotional Engagement). The findings are presented and analyzed below:

Table 12. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.724 <sup>a</sup>	.525	.509	2.433

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The results of the model summary indicate a strong positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The correlation coefficient (R) of 0,724 suggests a robust connection, showing that Internal and External Factors significantly influence students' engagement. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0,525 indicates that 52,5% of the variance in students' enthusiasm, willingness, and emotional engagement is explained by these factors, highlighting the model's ability to capture the dynamics effectively. Additionally, the adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0,509 confirms the model's stability and reliability. The minimal difference between  $R^2$  and Adjusted  $R^2$  indicates that the model effectively interprets the relationship between internal and external factors and student engagement without being skewed by irrelevant predictors. However, the unexplained 47.5% suggests that additional variables, like family support or access to technology, may further influence engagement, warranting exploration in future studies.

Table 13 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	392.093	2	196.047	33.118	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	355.177	60	5.920		
	Total	747.270	62			

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 33,118 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0,000. This indicates that **Internal and External Factors collectively have a meaningful influence on students' enthusiasm, willingness, and emotional engagement.** The significance level ( $p < 0,001$ ) confirms the substantial impact of these predictors on the outcome, validating the model's effectiveness in explaining the relationship between the variables. The findings emphasize the need to address both internal and external factors, with intrinsic motivation enhanced by positive external influences, suggesting that schools in underdeveloped areas could benefit from initiatives that improve external conditions to ensure equal opportunities for student engagement and success.

Table 14. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.681	2.672		5.119	.000
	Internal Factors	.419	.206	.233	2.035	.046
	External Factors	.523	.108	.555	4.859	.000

Source: Results of processing the SPSS program (2024)

**Internal Factors significantly influence the dependent variable, as demonstrated by the unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0,419$ ).** This indicates that for every one-unit increase in Internal Factors, there is a corresponding 0,419-unit increase in the dependent variable. Moreover, **the significance level ( $p = 0,046$ ) confirms that the effect is statistically meaningful ( $p < 0,05$ ).** These findings highlight the pivotal role of students' personal motivations, interests, and internal drive in shaping their engagement. **External Factors exhibit an even greater impact on the dependent variable, with an unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0,523$ ).** This suggests that a one-unit increase in External Factors results in a 0,523-unit rise in the dependent variable. **The statistical significance ( $p = 0,000$ ) is exceptionally strong ( $p < 0,001$ ),** underscoring the critical importance of external influences such as teaching quality, peer support, and environmental conditions in fostering student engagement and facilitating better learning outcomes. Comparing the standardized coefficients (Beta), **External Factors (Beta = 0,555) exert a more substantial influence on student engagement than Internal Factors (Beta = 0,233).** This comparison emphasizes the greater significance of cultivating an environment conducive to learning and emotional connection.

The findings highlight the greater influence of external factors like teacher training and peer collaboration on student engagement. However, the unexplained variance suggests the need for further research into additional variables, such as cultural, familial, and technological factors, with recommendations for schools to balance internal motivation with supportive external conditions to improve engagement.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study offer valuable insights into the factors influencing junior high school students' engagement with English language learning in rural Indonesia, which align with and extend the findings from previous research. Several key areas emerge from the comparison with existing studies,



highlighting the interplay of internal, external, and contextual factors that shape students' perceptions and learning outcomes.

### **Internal Factors and Emotional Engagement**

The study found that internal factors such as confidence, focus, and anxiety significantly influence emotional engagement with English, corroborating findings from previous studies. For instance, Mili (2020) highlighted the importance of integrative motivation, which encourages students to engage with English due to a desire to connect with English-speaking cultures. This supports the study's finding that motivation, even if not statistically significant, plays a moderate role in fostering emotional engagement. Furthermore, Derioh & Karim (2024) emphasized the pivotal role of teacher-student interactions in boosting student confidence, which aligns with the current study's suggestion to implement confidence-building activities. The correlation between anxiety and engagement ( $r = 0.375$ ) is consistent with Yacob and Md (2019), who found that moderate anxiety could motivate students to engage more deeply with material, thereby enhancing their learning experience. These findings highlight the importance of integrating strategies that address students' emotional and psychological needs to foster deeper engagement with the language.

### **External Factors and Engagement**

External factors, particularly the perception of English as a tool for global communication, were found to have a significant impact on student engagement, echoing the work of Mili (2020) and Susanti et al (2020), who emphasized the practical application of English in real-world contexts as a powerful motivator for students. This study found that students who saw English as a means of global communication were more engaged in their learning, highlighting the importance of embedding real-world uses of English into the curriculum. The desire to understand foreign media, such as movies and music, also emerged as a factor influencing engagement, albeit not as strongly as global communication, which is in line with findings from Susanti et al (2020) and Getie (2020), who noted the role of cultural and social influences in shaping students' attitudes toward English. While these cultural factors were relevant, they were secondary to the more immediate, practical benefits of English in the global context, supporting the need for curricula to focus on the utilitarian aspects of the language.

### **Socioeconomic and Contextual Factors**

The study's demographic analysis revealed that the majority of respondents came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with limited access to educational resources, particularly in rural areas. This finding is consistent with the work of Yacob and Md (2019), who noted that rural students face unique challenges in language learning due to limited access to resources and infrastructure. Similarly, Getie (2020) identified that social and educational barriers, such as limited peer and parental support, impact students' attitudes and engagement with learning. This study underscores the need for tailored interventions in rural settings to address these challenges and improve student

engagement, particularly by focusing on providing resources and support systems that are often scarce in rural schools. The rural-urban divide in educational experiences was further emphasized by Rahmaniar et al (2024), who highlighted the need for differentiated teaching approaches and resource allocation to bridge gaps in learning opportunities.

### **Gender and Learning Outcomes**

The gender distribution in this study showed a slight female majority (54%), which aligns with Getie (2020), who explored gender differences in language learning attitudes. Although gender-specific differences were not a primary focus of this study, it suggests the potential for further investigation into how gender influences perceptions and learning outcomes in language education. Gendered approaches to teaching, as suggested by Rahmaniar et al (2024), may help cater to diverse student needs, including those related to gender-specific learning preferences, which could enhance overall engagement and achievement in English learning.

### **Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies**

This study's results on assessment outcomes revealed that students performed better in formative, low-stakes assessments (e.g., daily tests) compared to summative, high-stakes assessments (e.g., mid-semester exams). This finding resonates with previous research by Yaccob and Md (2019) and Susanti et al (2020), which both highlighted the benefits of frequent, low-stress assessments in maintaining student motivation and engagement. Rahmaniar et al (2024) also emphasized the importance of differentiated assessment strategies to accommodate the diverse needs of students. The findings advocate for a shift towards formative assessments in rural settings where students may face higher levels of stress due to limited resources and support, thereby improving overall engagement and performance.

### **Synthesis with Previous Research**

This study not only confirms many of the findings from previous research but also extends the understanding of student engagement by highlighting the unique challenges faced by rural students in Indonesia. The study reinforces the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in shaping student engagement, with a particular focus on the practical applications of English and the need for confidence-building activities. While intrinsic motivation, including confidence and anxiety, plays a significant role in fostering emotional engagement, external factors, such as the perception of English as a tool for global communication, are crucial in motivating students. These findings align with the work of Mili (2020), Derioh & Karim (2024), and Getie (2020), who all identified the interplay of motivation, teacher influence, and contextual factors in language learning. This study also emphasizes the need for a holistic approach that integrates emotional, contextual, and practical elements into teaching strategies, especially in rural, resource-limited settings.

Thus, the study's findings contribute to the broader understanding of how internal and external factors interact to influence student engagement and

learning outcomes in rural contexts. By integrating these insights into teaching practices, educators can create more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environments that address the diverse needs of students, particularly those in under-resourced areas. This research underscores the importance of adapting educational strategies to local contexts, ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographical location, have the opportunity to thrive in their language learning journey.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the interplay of internal and external factors influencing junior high school students' engagement and perceptions of English learning, with particular attention to rural educational contexts. The findings reveal several critical insights and contributions to the field. The research highlights the significant role of internal factors, such as confidence and focus, in fostering emotional engagement. These findings suggest that creating supportive and structured learning environments is crucial for maximizing students' emotional and psychological readiness to learn. On the other hand, external factors, including students' perceptions of English as a global communication tool and its practical applications in accessing international media, emerged as dominant predictors of engagement.

In addition, demographic analysis identified specific challenges in rural settings, such as limited educational resources and socioeconomic disparities, which require targeted interventions to ensure equitable access to quality education. The study further demonstrated the advantages of frequent, low-stakes assessments in promoting consistent progress over high-stakes summative assessments, advocating for a balanced, personalized approach to evaluation. The implications of these findings are multifaceted. For educators and policymakers, the integration of real-world applications and global relevance into the curriculum is essential for fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Such curriculum designs can significantly enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes. Moreover, resource accessibility and formative assessment strategies should be prioritized in rural schools to bridge disparities and provide equitable learning opportunities.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. It focused on a specific demographic and educational setting, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore diverse educational contexts and longitudinally assess the effectiveness of interventions designed to enhance engagement. Furthermore, exploring additional factors, such as teacher training and parental involvement, may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping student engagement in English education.

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of contextualized learning, emotional engagement, and the integration of practical, globally relevant applications into English education. By addressing the identified

challenges and building on these findings, educators and stakeholders can develop more effective, inclusive, and engaging learning experiences that prepare students for the demands of a globalized world.

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### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

ZM contributed as the lead author by designing and conceptualizing the study, collecting, and analyzing data, and drafting the manuscript. S provided supervision and guidance to ZM, assisting in refining key conceptual ideas, theories, and supporting evidence, as well as reviewing and improving the manuscript.

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