

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of word puzzle games in teaching English vocabulary at SMP Swasta Methodist 9 Medan. A qualitative descriptive approach was applied, involving one English teacher and 23 eighth-grade students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, and analyzed through data preparation, reading and reflection, coding and categorization, and theme development. The findings show that word puzzle games were implemented effectively as a student-centered activity that increased engagement and reduced monotony in vocabulary learning. Both the teacher and students perceived the games as enjoyable and motivating, with students reporting improved understanding, collaboration, and confidence. The teacher also viewed the games as useful for enhancing vocabulary mastery, critical thinking, and creating a supportive classroom atmosphere. Several challenges were identified, including differences in student proficiency, time management, classroom noise, and preparation demands. Overall, the study concludes that word puzzle games are an effective gamification strategy for vocabulary instruction when supported by proper planning and classroom management.

**Keywords:** word puzzle games, vocabulary teaching, gamification, students' perceptions, teacher perceptions, qualitative study.