

OPTIMISING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS A LEARNING RESOURCE IN INCREASING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' INTEREST IN READING

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Abstract

School libraries play an important role in supporting the learning process and developing students' literacy, but they are often not optimally utilised. This study uses the literature method. The results show that school library optimisation can be achieved through several key strategies. Firstly, improving the physical quality of the library by creating a child-friendly and visually appealing environment. Secondly, the development of a diverse collection of books in accordance with students' interests and abilities. Third, the integration of library activities with the school curriculum through active collaboration between librarians and teachers. Fourth, the implementation of interactive programmes such as storytelling, book clubs and reading competitions to increase student engagement. Fifth, the utilisation of digital technology to attract digital generation students. Sixth, involving parents and communities in literacy activities to strengthen the reading culture.

Keywords: School library, reading interest, learning resources, primary school.

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in children's intellectual and social development. Reading is a complex process that involves cognitive and linguistic abilities to understand and interpret written information. This activity includes recognising letters, words and sentences, and understanding the meaning contained therein (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Guna et al., 2024). Reading is not just about reciting words, but also involves the process of critical thinking, analysing, and connecting the

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information read with pre-existing knowledge. Through reading, a person can gain new knowledge, develop imagination, improve language skills, and broaden their horizons about the world around them. Therefore, reading is a fundamental skill that is very important in education and everyday life (Sisson & Sisson, 2024a).

In the growing information age, reading is becoming increasingly important as a key to accessing knowledge and developing critical thinking skills.

At the primary level, reading plays a crucial role in children's development and is an important foundation for their future education. At this stage, children begin to recognise letters, words and simple sentences, which then develop into the ability to understand more complex texts (Soleh & Wati, 2021). Reading skills acquired at the primary level not only help children in language learning, but also support their understanding in various other subjects. In addition, reading at the primary level also stimulates children's cognitive development, improving memory, concentration and critical thinking skills (Albar & Zulikhatin, 2021).

Furthermore, reading at the primary level helps children develop their imagination and creativity, and broaden their horizons about the world around them. Through age-appropriate story books and informative reading, children can enrich their vocabulary, improve their communication skills, and develop empathy towards others (Syamsuri et al., 2021). Reading habits instilled early on can also encourage curiosity and a love of learning that will be beneficial throughout their lives. Thus, the importance of reading at the primary level cannot be overlooked, as this skill sets the stage for children's future academic and personal success (Oluwatosin & Akporhonor, 2021).

However, there is a problem where the phenomenon of low interest in reading among primary school students in Indonesia is still a problem that needs serious attention.

Based on the results of a UNESCO survey in 2016, Indonesian people's interest in reading ranked 60 out of 61 countries. This data reflects a concerning condition, especially considering that the habit of reading should be instilled from an early age. This low interest in reading can have a negative impact on students' academic performance and their ability to face future challenges (Martesya & Abduh, 2024).

The school library, as one of the important educational facilities, has great potential to become a learning resource centre that can increase students' interest in reading. However, the reality is that many school libraries have not been optimally utilised. Several factors contribute to this, among others: Limited collection of books that are interesting and relevant for primary school students, Lack of programs that encourage students to visit and use the library, Limited human resources who are skilled in managing school libraries, Less comfortable and attractive library environment for students and Lack of integration between classroom learning activities and library utilisation (Jannah & Neolaka, 2023).

On the other hand, the development of information and communication technology has changed children's behaviour patterns in accessing information and entertainment. The presence of gadgets and social media often distracts students from reading books. This adds to the challenge of increasing primary school students' interest in reading (Sisson & Sisson, 2024b). Given the important role of the school library as a learning resource and its potential to increase reading interest, an in-depth study of school library optimisation strategies is needed. This study aims to explore the various efforts that can be made to optimise the function of school libraries as an effective learning resource in increasing elementary school students' interest in reading (Adriana et al., 2022).

By understanding the factors that influence students' reading interest and identifying effective strategies in optimising the role of school libraries, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of education at the primary school level, especially in terms of developing a culture of literacy and students' reading interest.

Research Methods

In this study, researchers used the literature research method, which is a research that focuses on collecting and analysing information from various existing written sources. (Iryana, 2019); (DEWI, 2019); (Zaluchu, 2020).

Results and Discussion

School Library

A school library is a work unit that is an integral part of a school educational institution, which acts as a centre of information and knowledge resources to support the learning process and intellectual development of students and teachers. This library provides various types of collections of library materials, both print and non-print, which are organised systematically to facilitate the retrieval of information (Hendratno et al., 2022). Its function is not only as a place to store and borrow books, but also as a centre for teaching and learning activities, simple research, and intellectual recreation for all school members. Thus, the school library plays an important role in supporting the achievement of educational goals and the school curriculum, as well as helping to develop reading interest and independent learning habits among students (Endiawan et al., 2020).

The school library has several vital functions in supporting the educational process and intellectual development of students. First, as an information resource centre, the library provides a variety of library materials that support the curriculum and broaden students' horizons. Second, the library serves as a centre for teaching and learning activities, where teachers and students can use the collection to deepen their

understanding of the subject matter (Lianingsih et al., 2022). Third, the library acts as a place of intellectual recreation, allowing students to explore their interests and develop reading habits. Fourth, the library serves as a simple research centre, helping students with school assignments and projects. Fifth, the library plays a role in developing information literacy skills, teaching students how to locate, evaluate and use information effectively. Finally, the library serves as an agent of change and cultural agent, introducing students to various aspects of knowledge and culture. With these functions, the school library becomes an integral component in supporting students' learning and personal development (Marhamah, 2022).

The school library consists of several important components that are interrelated and support its function as a learning resource centre. These components include: (1) A collection of library materials, which includes textbooks, reference books, magazines, newspapers, and non-print materials such as CDs/DVDs and digital resources; (2) Human resources, including trained librarians or library managers; (3) Physical facilities, such as rooms, bookshelves, reading tables, and other furniture; (4) Equipment and technology, including computers, library automation systems, and internet access; (5) Budget for procurement and maintenance of collections and facilities; (6) Library services, such as circulation, reference, and information literacy guidance; (7) Policies and procedures governing library operations; and (8) Programmes and activities that support library utilisation and the development of interest in reading. All these components work together to create a conducive learning environment and support the achievement of educational goals in schools (Yuniar & Nurdyansyah, 2023); (Supartiningsih & Wibowo, 2023).

With its diverse functions and mutually supportive components, the school library plays a vital role in creating a dynamic and effective learning environment. Libraries not only provide access to information sources, but also encourage the development of critical thinking skills, increase reading interest and support lifelong learning. Therefore, the development and management of a good school library is essential to support the quality of education and shape a knowledgeable and informed generation.

Learning Resources

Learning resources are anything that can be used to facilitate and support the learning process, either individually or in groups. It includes various forms of media, materials, equipment, environments, and people that can assist learners in obtaining information, knowledge, experience, and skills (Antika et al., 2024). Learning resources can be textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, the internet, video, audio, museums, laboratories, the natural environment, resource persons, or even certain situations and conditions specifically designed for learning purposes. The main function of learning resources is to facilitate and accelerate the learning process, increase

effectiveness and efficiency in achieving educational goals, and provide opportunities for students to learn according to their respective learning styles and speeds (Supartiningsih & Wibowo, 2023). Thus, learning resources have a very important role in creating a meaningful and comprehensive learning experience.

Learning resources can be classified into several main types, which include print learning resources (such as textbooks, magazines, newspapers and journals), non-print learning resources (including audio visuals such as films, videos and sound recordings), electronic learning resources (such as the internet, educational software and e-books), environmental learning resources (both natural and socio-cultural environments), people learning resources (such as teachers, experts and practitioners) and technical learning resources (including demonstrations, simulations and educational games) (Haeroni et al., 2023). In addition, there are also learning resources in the form of facilities and equipment (such as laboratories, libraries, and museums), as well as activity learning resources (for example projects, group discussions, and field trips). This diversity of learning resources allows educators and learners to choose and use the resources that best suit their needs, learning styles and learning objectives, thus creating a richer, more effective and meaningful learning experience (Lianingsih et al., 2022).

Libraries have a vital role as a comprehensive and multidimensional learning resource in supporting the process of education and lifelong learning. As a centre of information and knowledge, libraries provide broad access to various types of collections, ranging from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, to digital resources such as e-books and online databases (Hwang, 2020). Libraries not only serve as a place to store and borrow library materials, but also act as a facilitator in developing information literacy, encouraging interest in reading, and supporting research. With diverse services, such as comfortable reading rooms, discussion areas, internet access, and the assistance of trained librarians, libraries create a conducive learning environment for various user groups. Furthermore, modern libraries often become hubs of community activities, hosting educational programmes, workshops and exhibitions that enrich the learning experience of their patrons (Umairah & Amaliyah, 2022). Thus, libraries are not only passive resources, but also play an active role in promoting independent, collaborative and sustainable learning, and contribute significantly to the formation of a knowledge society.

Reading Interest

Reading interest can be defined as a strong and sustainable psychological tendency in a person to be interested, motivated, and derive pleasure from reading activities. It is a combination of desire, drive, and enjoyment in exploring various types of reading materials, both for information, learning, and entertainment purposes (Tonia & Liansari, 2023). Reading interest not only includes the frequency and duration of

reading, but also involves emotional and cognitive aspects, such as curiosity, concentration, and the ability to understand and analyse reading content. Individuals with high reading interest tend to proactively seek opportunities to read, utilise their free time to interact with different types of texts, and view reading as an enjoyable and rewarding activity (Santi, 2023). Strong reading interest is also often associated with increased knowledge, language skill development, critical thinking, and creativity, and plays an important role in the formation of lifelong learning habits (Huang & Shieh, 2021).

Reading interest is influenced by various interrelated factors, both internal and external. Internally, factors such as personal motivation, intelligence level, reading ability, genre preference and attitude towards reading play an important role. Meanwhile, external factors include family, school and community environments, including the availability and accessibility of interesting and age-appropriate reading materials. The role of parents in introducing and encouraging early reading habits, as well as the example they set, is crucial (Oh & Mancilla-Martinez, 2021). In schools, a curriculum that supports literacy, engaging teaching methods and the presence of a well-stocked library can stimulate students' interest in reading. Socio-economic factors also come into play, where access to books and other reading resources can be limited to certain economic groups. In the digital age, the availability of technology and electronic media can be a double-edged sword - on the one hand it provides wide access to digital reading, but on the other hand it can be a distraction from reading. Societal cultures that value knowledge and learning, as well as government policies that support literacy development, also contribute significantly to shaping and sustaining people's interest in reading (Fawait et al., 2024); (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024).

To increase interest in reading, a holistic approach involving various strategies is required. Firstly, it is important to create a literacy-rich environment at home, school and in the community by providing a variety of reading materials that are interesting and appropriate to the interests and ability levels of readers. Introducing reading at an early age through storytelling and shared reading can instil a habit and love for books (Rajić, 2023). In schools, the use of interactive and fun teaching methods, such as book talks, literature circles, and project-based learning that involve reading activities, can stimulate students' interest. The use of technology, such as e-books and reading-based learning apps, can also attract the digital generation. Programmes such as reading challenges, book clubs and literacy festivals can create external motivation and a community of readers (Edwards et al., 2023). It is also important to connect reading to everyday life and personal interests, so that reading is not only seen as an academic task but also as a source of enjoyment and personal development. Collaboration between parents, teachers, librarians and other stakeholders in promoting a reading culture is crucial. Finally, providing rewards and recognition for achievements in reading can

strengthen motivation and build readers' confidence, especially for those who are just starting their literacy journey (Chaerunnisa et al., 2024).

Effective strategies for optimising the role of school libraries in primary school students

Optimising the role of the school library for primary school students requires a comprehensive and child-centred strategy. One effective strategy is to create a child-friendly and visually appealing library environment. The use of bright colours, fun decorations and comfortable spatial arrangements can make students feel at home and interested in visiting the library (Mustadi & Amri, 2020). Providing diverse reading areas, such as soft cushion corners, small group tables, and story-telling rooms, can accommodate students' various reading preferences. In addition, the provision of a diverse book collection that is suitable for the reading level and interests of primary school students is essential to maintain their interest in reading (Mustadi & Amri, 2020).

The second strategy is to integrate library activities into the school curriculum. Collaboration between librarians and classroom teachers can result in programmes that link subject matter to library resources. For example, holding regular 'library hours' where classes visit for simple reading or research activities related to the topic being studied (Hamzah et al., 2023). Early introduction of information literacy skills, such as how to search for books, understand simple classification systems and evaluate age-appropriate information sources, is also important for building a foundation for lifelong learning (Kalinina et al., 2022).

Organising engaging and interactive programmes is the third effective strategy. Activities such as interactive storytelling, children's book clubs, reading competitions, and book-based student work exhibitions can increase student interest and participation (Privette, 2020). 'Buddy reading' programmes where upper-grade students read to their younger siblings can also build a community of supportive readers. Inviting children's book authors or inspirational figures to share their experiences can provide additional motivation for students to read and write. The use of technology, such as the use of e-books, reading-based learning apps and literacy gamification programs, can also attract digital generation students (Patrick, 2020).

Finally, involving parents and communities in library activities is an equally important strategy. Organising family literacy workshops, where parents learn how to support their children's reading at home, can extend the library's impact beyond the school. The 'Borrow a Book Bag' programme, which allows students to borrow a set of books to read with their families at home, can also increase parental involvement (Yarmi, 2022). Collaboration with the local public library for book exchange programmes or joint visits can broaden students' horizons about the literacy resources available in their communities. By implementing these strategies consistently and creatively, the

school library can become a dynamic learning centre and play an important role in developing primary school students' love of reading and literacy skills (Sari et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The school library has a vital role as a learning resource that can increase primary school students' interest in reading. Optimising the school library is a strategic step in creating a learning environment that supports the development of literacy and a love of reading. Through planned and targeted efforts, the school library can be transformed into an exciting, informative and inspiring centre of activity for students.

Some of the key strategies in optimising school libraries include making the physical space more child-friendly, providing a diverse and relevant book collection, integrating library activities with the school curriculum and organising interactive programmes that encourage active student participation. In addition, the use of technology and the involvement of parents and communities are also important factors in expanding the positive impact of libraries on students' reading interest.

By optimising the function of school libraries, it is hoped that a strong reading culture can be created among primary school students. This will not only improve their literacy skills but also support their academic development, creativity and critical thinking skills. Ultimately, the optimisation of school libraries contributes to the formation of a generation that loves to read, is broad-minded and ready to face challenges in the ever-evolving information age.

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