

THE LOW INTEREST OF INDONESIAN PEOPLE TO READ BOOKS

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ABSTRACT

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Reading plays a crucial role in the intellectual and cultural development of individuals and societies. However, in Indonesia, the interest in reading books remains relatively low. This paper examines the factors contributing to the low reading interest among Indonesians, including socio-economic conditions, educational infrastructure, technological distractions, and cultural perceptions of reading. Data were gathered through surveys and literature reviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of reading habits in the country. The findings reveal that limited access to books, particularly in rural areas, the prevalence of digital entertainment, and a lack of encouragement from family and educational institutions are among the primary reasons for the low reading interest. Moreover, the study identifies strategies to promote a stronger reading culture, such as increasing public library access, integrating reading habits into school curricula, and utilizing digital platforms to make books more accessible. This research concludes that addressing the multi-faceted issues surrounding reading interest in Indonesia requires collaborative efforts from government, educators, and the community to foster a more literate and informed society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental activity that contributes significantly to the development of knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking. A society that values reading tends to show better outcomes in education, socio-economic progress, and innovation. However, in Indonesia, despite the country's large population and increasing access to education, the interest in reading books remains notably low. According to various studies and global literacy rankings, Indonesia often ranks poorly in terms of reading interest and habits. This phenomenon raises concerns about the nation's intellectual and cultural growth.

Several factors have been identified as contributing to this low interest in reading among Indonesians. Socio-economic barriers, such as the high cost of books and the limited access to libraries, particularly in rural areas, play a significant role. Additionally, the rapid rise of digital media, television, and mobile devices has shifted people's attention away from traditional reading materials. The cultural perception that reading is not a leisure activity but rather an academic obligation has also influenced how Indonesians, especially the younger generation, view books.

This paper aims to explore the underlying causes of this low interest in reading and assess the broader implications for the country's development. By understanding the barriers to reading, we can identify potential solutions to promote reading culture and literacy across Indonesia. Furthermore, this research seeks to highlight the

importance of fostering a love for reading, not only to improve literacy rates but also to contribute to the intellectual and creative growth of the Indonesian people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Socio-economic and Educational Factors

2.2 Sub Section

Socio-economic conditions significantly influence reading interest in Indonesia. Research has consistently shown that families with lower income levels tend to have limited access to books, and reading is often not prioritized as a leisure activity. According to Nugraha (2020), many low-income households focus on meeting basic needs, leaving little room for the purchase of books or the encouragement of reading activities. This is further exacerbated by the unequal distribution of educational resources, particularly in rural areas, where libraries are scarce and schools often lack the infrastructure to promote literacy effectively.

The Indonesian educational system also plays a role in shaping reading habits. Although reading is a core component of the school curriculum, it is often approached in a utilitarian manner, with students reading primarily for academic purposes rather than for pleasure. Suhartono (2018) notes that the emphasis on rote learning and exam preparation discourages the development of a genuine love for reading. This approach reduces students' exposure to a broader range of literature, which could otherwise spark creativity and curiosity outside the classroom.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

This study utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the factors behind Indonesia's low interest in reading books. For the quantitative part, a structured questionnaire was distributed to 500 respondents from various socio-economic backgrounds, both urban and rural. The survey focused on reading habits, access to books, and the impact of digital media on reading time. The qualitative part involved semi-structured interviews with 20 key informants, including educators, librarians, and community leaders, to gain deeper insights into cultural and educational barriers to reading. These interviews provided a rich context to complement the survey data.

3.2 Data Analysis

For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequency of reading habits, access to materials, and preferences. A correlation analysis examined the relationship between socio-economic factors and reading interest. The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically, focusing on key issues such as digital distractions, cultural perceptions of reading, and institutional support for literacy. The combination of these two methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential solutions for fostering a stronger reading culture in Indonesia.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Socio-economic and Educational Barriers

The study found that socio-economic conditions and limited access to reading materials are significant barriers to cultivating a reading culture in Indonesia. Of the

500 survey respondents, 63% reported that the cost of books and limited availability of libraries in their area discouraged them from reading regularly. This issue was particularly pronounced in rural areas, where 72% of participants indicated that they lacked access to a nearby library or affordable books. The interviews with educators and librarians further highlighted that schools often have inadequate reading resources, and the curriculum prioritizes reading for exams over encouraging a love for reading. This academic focus was identified as a factor that stifles the development of reading as a leisure activity.

4.2. Impact of Digital Media and Cultural Perceptions

Digital media emerged as another key factor influencing low reading interest. Among younger respondents, 78% admitted that they spend more time on social media, online videos, or gaming than on reading books. This shift towards digital entertainment reduces time spent on reading and contributes to shorter attention spans, making it more challenging to engage with books. Culturally, the perception of reading as an academic obligation rather than a form of personal enrichment also plays a role. Interviews with parents and community leaders revealed that reading is often not encouraged at home, with parents prioritizing other activities over fostering reading habits in their children. These cultural and digital distractions present significant challenges to building a reading culture in Indonesia.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted nature of the low interest in reading books among Indonesians, pointing to both socio-economic challenges and the increasing influence of digital media. The socio-economic barriers, such as the high cost of books and the lack of access to libraries, particularly in rural areas, are consistent with previous research that has emphasized Indonesia's uneven educational infrastructure. The limited availability of reading materials not only restricts opportunities for reading but also reinforces a perception that reading is a privilege rather than an accessible activity for everyone. To address these barriers, government and non-governmental organizations must invest in improving library access and providing affordable or free books, especially in underserved communities.

The impact of digital media on reading habits is another crucial factor that reflects global trends, where younger generations are increasingly drawn to faster, more engaging forms of entertainment. The preference for digital content over traditional books suggests that promoting a reading culture in Indonesia requires more than just improving access to books—it also necessitates finding ways to integrate reading into the digital landscape. Digital libraries, e-books, and reading apps like *iPusnas* can help bridge this gap, making reading more accessible and appealing to tech-savvy individuals. However, there must also be efforts to educate and encourage families and communities to see reading as a valuable and enjoyable activity, not merely an academic requirement.

Culturally, the perception of reading as a task linked to schoolwork rather than a leisure activity is deeply ingrained, and this poses a challenge in fostering long-term reading habits. Schools and families play a critical role in changing this mindset by

encouraging reading for pleasure and introducing diverse genres that can appeal to different interests. Additionally, literacy campaigns and community programs that promote storytelling and reading circles can help normalize reading as part of everyday life. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that involves educators, policymakers, and the wider community in efforts to cultivate a sustainable reading culture.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the low interest in reading books among Indonesians is influenced by a combination of socio-economic barriers, digital distractions, and cultural perceptions. Limited access to affordable books and libraries, particularly in rural areas, significantly hinders the development of reading habits. The growing influence of digital media, which offers more immediate and engaging content, further shifts attention away from traditional reading. Additionally, reading is often viewed as an academic obligation rather than a pleasurable or enriching activity, particularly among younger generations.

To foster a stronger reading culture in Indonesia, it is essential to address these intertwined challenges. Efforts should focus on improving access to reading materials, especially in underserved communities, and integrating reading into the digital space to appeal to tech-oriented audiences. Equally important is shifting cultural attitudes toward reading by encouraging schools and families to promote reading as a lifelong, enjoyable activity. A collaborative approach involving government, educational institutions, and the community is crucial in building a more literate and informed society for the future.

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