

Factors Inhibiting Lack of Interest in Reading among Middle School Students in Class VIII

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Abstract

The main question of this research is what is the reading interest of class VIII junior high school students and what factors influence the reading interest of class VIII junior high school students. The aim of this research is to explain the reading interest of class VIII junior high school students, the factors inhibiting class VIII junior high school students' interest in reading, and increase reading interest in class VIII junior high school students. This type of research is descriptive and qualitative. Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews and observation. Based on the research results, there are two factors that hinder students' interest in reading, namely internal factors such as the inability to read fluently, lack of motivation and reading habits, as well as lack of understanding of the content being read and external factors, an unsupportive school environment is one of the causal factors, Economics family, lack of equipment, and students' habit of playing with devices.

Keywords: Inhibiting Factors, Reading Interest, Effort

Introduction Section

Interest in reading is a profound and compelling inclination that accompanies the pleasure derived from engaging in reading activities, motivating individuals to read voluntarily. It is worth noting that interest in reading is not innate but rather cultivated from an early age. Therefore, nurturing students' interest in reading is most effective when initiated during childhood. The objective of fostering interest in reading is to integrate reading into students' lives as an essential aspect, rather than merely a pastime. As students' interest in reading grows, so does their enjoyment of the activity (Sudarsana, 2010: 4.27).

According to Kasiyun (2015), interest in reading plays a pivotal role in national development, as proficiency in science and technology hinges on a strong inclination towards reading, surpassing other forms of passive learning such as listening. For instance, in rural agricultural communities, farmers who avidly engage with educational materials can implement modern farming techniques and utilize advanced seeds, resulting in increased productivity. Conversely, farmers who neglect to invest in reading may miss out on opportunities to enhance their agricultural practices and consequently fall behind in global agricultural advancements.

Indonesian language learning represents a crucial facet of education capable of cultivating an environment conducive to realizing students' potential. Proficiency in Indonesian encompasses mastery of writing, reading, and speaking skills, necessitating students to adopt a systematic approach towards comprehension and problem-solving. Despite its significance, Indonesian language studies often encounter low student interest levels. This disinterest may stem from conventional teaching methods lacking innovation. By contrast, innovative and constructive teaching strategies have the potential to stimulate students' curiosity, enhance their engagement, and foster creativity throughout the learning journey.

Children's interest in reading is influenced by various factors, including family dynamics and environmental surroundings (Pradana, 2020). One contributing factor to low reading interest is the limited availability of library resources (Pradana, 2020). Moreover, the adverse effects of technological advancements extend beyond hindering direct interaction and communication, significantly impacting individuals' lifestyles. With the prevalence of online gaming and digital gadgets, students are increasingly drawn to these activities, leading to a decline in their interest in reading traditional books (Pradana, 2020).

The learning process ought to encompass the realities of life's complexities, encompassing both the highs and lows. Thus, school-based learning should emphasize the intricate dynamics of organisms within their tangible habitats, fostering insights that can prove invaluable in the future (Fadilah et al., 2020). Learning experiences that necessitate intellectual

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struggle leave a lasting impact and pave the way for a more robust educational journey compared to effortless learning. Despite the widespread availability and dissemination of modern technical knowledge in today's universal era, academic offerings often receive inadequate attention. Surprisingly, many individuals gravitate towards teaching through mediums such as comics, novels, stories, and practical lessons, each of which offers numerous advantages.

Moreover, contemporary students exhibit a preference for accessing literature readily available on the internet. However, there arises a concern when the material accessed is not suitable for the students' developmental stage or age. Regrettably, the reading culture in secondary schools remains alarmingly low. The reality is that there are still students who demonstrate reluctance or lack enthusiasm when encouraged to read and study. This assertion can be corroborated through observation. For instance, in junior high school, some students harbor negative perceptions that learning Indonesian is tedious and monotonous. This poses a significant challenge for educators that demands immediate attention. To cultivate a genuine interest in reading and Indonesian language learning among middle school students, it is imperative to introduce reading activities from an early age.

The issue with reading in Indonesia lies in the fact that people's reading habits and general interest in reading are still low. Poor reading habits and a lack of social interest undoubtedly impact students' reading habits and enthusiasm. This situation poses a significant detriment to the nation. Hence, concrete efforts are required to enhance public and student interest in reading.

In simple terms, interest denotes a strong inclination, enthusiasm, or desire for something. Cultivating an interest in reading should be initiated and pursued across all facets, encompassing education, social interactions, cultural engagements, and leisure activities (Susanto, 2016). Addressing existing challenges promptly is crucial, with efforts aimed at fostering a love for reading starting as early as possible. This approach ensures that students can derive enjoyment from reading in all aspects of their lives, including school, home, and their surroundings.

The utilization of media in education aids in overcoming socio-cultural barriers among students. When students possess diverse habits, customs, environments, and experiences, their perceptions and comprehension of learning topics may vary. These differences in socio-cultural backgrounds can potentially lead to conflicts among students. The challenge for educational media is to ignite students' enthusiasm for learning.

Method

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research aims to gain a comprehensive and lucid understanding of the phenomena experienced by research subjects in specific natural settings, utilizing various scientific methodologies to articulate findings verbally and clearly. As outlined by Hamzah (2019), qualitative research involves the application of systematic, logical, empirical, and methodological approaches to natural phenomena, within a philosophical framework or paradigm, aimed at understanding nature. The data sources utilized in this research comprise primary and secondary sources, with the primary focus on eighth-grade junior high school students.

Various tools are employed for data collection techniques, namely: (a) interviews to assess the reading interests of Class VIII junior high school students, (b) observations to identify factors impeding students' reading interests in Class VIII junior high school, and (c) the utilization of phase analysis by researchers to enhance interest in reading for Class VIII junior high school students. Suwandi elaborated on three levels of activity in qualitative data analysis, which include: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) data interpretation.

Result and Discussion

Reading interest, inhibiting factors and efforts to increase reading interest can be described as follows:

Reading Interest of Class VIII Middle School Students

The reading interest among Class VIII middle school students appears to be relatively low, necessitating efforts to cultivate interest in reading within teaching and learning activities. This is evident from interviews where students commonly express infrequent engagement with books unless prompted by teachers. Several obstacles contribute to this lack of interest, notably the students' low awareness of the importance of reading. Researchers conducted interviews with a subset of students, recording discussions with four out of twenty-five students, including two females and two males.

Analysis of these interviews revealed that students typically allocate little time to reading at home, instead opting to spend leisure time watching TV and playing games on their cellphones. Many perceive reading as dull, preferring books with pictures and illustrations to alleviate boredom while engaging with textual content. Although some students may occasionally read during free time in class, there's minimal peer encouragement for reading outside of teacher directives, with many students opting to relax in the canteen during breaks. Notably, the school's policy prohibits bringing cellphones to campus, thereby limiting digital distractions. Additionally, there are no organized reading or writing activities before school hours.

Researchers collected data on students' reading fluency through observations and interviews, revealing a pattern of boredom and lack of enthusiasm towards reading among students. It was observed that students easily lose interest in reading and seek alternative activities when not engaged in other pursuits. These findings align with insights from teacher interviews, indicating that many students have yet to achieve optimal reading proficiency. Many struggle to read fluently, resorting to spelling words letter by letter, and possess limited knowledge of letters. According to teachers, parents face challenges in overseeing their children's study habits at home, as children often prioritize play over academic activities or reading.

Factors Inhibiting Students' Lack of Interest in Reading

Based on observations and interviews, data was collected regarding the factors inhibiting reading interest among Class VIII middle school students, categorized as internal and external factors. This classification is consistent with findings from several studies by Dandi Solahudin et al. (2022), which identify two primary inhibiting factors. Internal factors stem from the students themselves and include challenges such as poor reading comprehension and limited personal interest in reading. Many students struggle to understand what they read and lack the habit of reading independently. Instead, they primarily read books only when instructed by teachers, seldom seek out reading materials that cater to their interests and needs in the library, and often resort to online sources for reading materials.

External factors, on the other hand, are influenced by environmental or institutional factors. These include insufficient support from the school environment, the absence of dedicated spaces for reading outside of the school library, and the suboptimal role of the school library in promoting reading. These external factors contribute to the overall decline in students' reading interest and engagement.

Internal factors

Internal factors contributing to the hindrance of students' interest in reading include low motivation and a deficient reading culture among students. Many students exhibit little initiative to read, engaging in reading activities only when prompted or compelled by teachers. They seldom utilize their free or break times to visit the library and display a passive approach to reading, typically completing reading tasks by responding to questions as directed by teachers. Research conducted by Salma & Mudzanatun (2019) suggests that the pervasive lack of interest in reading among students stems from a dearth of literacy initiatives within schools aimed at fostering students' reading interest. This indicates a systemic issue within educational institutions that necessitates attention and intervention to cultivate a vibrant reading culture among students.

As noted by Sri Hayu Wibayanti & Ruslan (2019) in their research findings, students' diminished interest in reading often stems from a perception of laziness and a view of reading as a dull activity. This mindset persists due to many students' lack of comprehension regarding the significance of reading and its potential benefits.

To address this issue and enhance students' interest in reading, proactive efforts are necessary. One proposed approach is for teachers to organize competitions aimed at heightening students' understanding of the importance of reading and fostering enthusiasm for it. Competitions can serve as effective tools to incentivize engagement and highlight the value of reading, thereby motivating students to actively participate in reading activities and develop a positive attitude towards reading.

Based on the data collected from observations and interviews, additional internal factors hindering students' interest in reading include a lack of comprehension of reading content. Students often encounter challenges in grasping the substance and significance of the material they read. This difficulty becomes evident during observations when students struggle to retell or summarize what they have read. According to feedback from teachers during interviews, a significant portion of students face difficulties in comprehending the content of their reading assignments. However, when reading materials are translated into their mother tongue, students demonstrate improved understanding and can accurately reconstruct the content. This highlights the importance of language accessibility in facilitating comprehension and underscores the need for strategies that accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds to promote effective reading engagement among students.

External Factors

Based on the findings from observations and interviews, external factors impeding students' interest in reading are attributed to deficiencies in the school environment. The school setting significantly influences students' reading enthusiasm, yet observations and interviews indicate that literacy training is not provided to students prior to learning activities. Moreover, the design of the school environment lacks clarity on how to enhance reading interest. While schools typically offer reading facilities such as libraries, these resources are often incomplete, and there is a lack of organizational elements like folders or reading corners to showcase students' work.

Research findings by Julita Lilis & Nurul Asma (2021) advocate for the creation of outdoor reading rooms or reading gardens as a means to stimulate students' interest in reading. Additionally, Nopitasari et al. (2021) highlight the crucial role of teachers in fostering reading interest, emphasizing the positive correlation between teacher involvement and students'

reading engagement. Teachers play a pivotal role in cultivating reading and writing habits among students, often initiating literacy activities that contribute to the development of reading interest, as supported by the insights from Cahya Rohim & Rahmawati (2020).

Through interviews and observations, it has been discerned that external factors impeding students' interest in reading include family economic circumstances. Teachers reported that economically disadvantaged families often do not prioritize fostering their children's reading interest due to the necessity for additional income, leading to limited encouragement for reading activities. Moreover, the absence of parent-teacher conferences results in students being assigned extra chores or required to assist with household tasks after school, leaving them with little time for reading. This finding aligns with research indicating that environmental factors, such as a lack of parental attention and guidance, contribute to diminished reading interest among students (Pratiwi, 2020).

Based on interviews and observations, it has been determined that external factors, specifically the lack of equipment and students' inclination towards playing with gadgets, exert a significant influence on students' interest in reading. The scarcity of resources primarily affects the availability of reading materials, with each group of four to five students often having access to only one book. This limitation impedes students' ability to access books effectively, hindering their reading engagement. Additionally, the prevalence of gadget usage among students surpasses their engagement with reading materials. This behavior is attributed to the absence of parental supervision at home, allowing students to prioritize gadget usage over reading activities. Consequently, the allure of electronic devices diverts students' attention away from reading, contributing to a decline in their reading interest and habits.

Efforts to Increase Students' Interest in Reading

Absolutely, cultivating a habit of reading from an early age is crucial for enhancing students' interest in reading and fostering a love for learning. Both teachers and parents play vital roles in nurturing this habit and encouraging children to appreciate the value of reading. To instill a love of reading in children, parents can lead by example by becoming avid readers themselves, actively encouraging their children to read, and dedicating time to read together. Creating a supportive environment at home where reading materials are readily available further reinforces this habit and fosters a positive attitude towards reading. Similarly, improvement efforts can be implemented within the school environment to promote reading interest. Motivating parents and teachers to prioritize reading, establishing book clubs or reading groups, and rewarding children who demonstrate a passion for reading are effective strategies. Additionally, enhancing the presentation of reading materials with attractive packaging can capture students' attention and make reading more appealing. By implementing these strategies both at home and in the school environment, we can create a culture that values reading and empowers students to become lifelong learners.

Absolutely, sustaining and enhancing students' interest in reading requires ongoing efforts, aligning closely with the AIDA behavioral framework—Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. Capturing students' attention and fostering curiosity about the subject matter is essential for igniting their desire and motivation to read. When students are genuinely interested and motivated, they develop a passion for reading, which drives them to take action and engage with reading materials enthusiastically.

By focusing on capturing students' attention and stimulating their curiosity, educators can lay the groundwork for fostering a genuine interest in reading. This initial spark can then evolve into a deep-seated desire to explore more reading materials and delve into various topics. Ultimately, when students are motivated and passionate about reading, they are more likely to take proactive steps to seek out reading opportunities and immerse themselves in the world of literature. Therefore, ongoing efforts are crucial not only to increase students' interest in reading but also to maintain and nurture that interest over time. By leveraging strategies that align with the AIDA framework, educators can effectively cultivate a culture of reading and empower students to become lifelong readers.

Therefore, students always try to fulfill their reading needs and understand the meaning of the words written in the text, or while reading. Efforts that can be made to increase students' interest in reading are as follows: (a) They need support from parents, teachers and friends. (b) Books can be given to students before they start studying. Developing reading habits (c) Choosing reading that is fun and educational for students (d) Providing a positive influence on students to enjoy reading. (e) utilize existing facilities and infrastructure.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research and subsequent discussion, it can be concluded that the reading interest among Class VIII middle school students remains relatively low and requires concerted efforts to cultivate a passion for reading within teaching and learning activities. Several factors contribute to hindering students' interest in reading. Internally, students face challenges such as difficulty reading fluently due to perceived laziness or boredom, lack of motivation and reading habits, and insufficient initiative in engaging with reading materials.

Additionally, language barriers, particularly a lack of proficiency in Indonesian, impede students' comprehension of written text. Externally, environmental factors within the school context, such as uninspiring library designs, contribute to

students' disinterest in reading. Economic constraints at home, including the need for additional parental income, limit students' time and access to reading materials.

Moreover, the prevalence of gadget usage among students further detracts from their inclination towards reading, as they prioritize digital entertainment over traditional reading activities. Addressing these challenges requires multifaceted approaches, including enhancing teaching strategies to foster reading engagement, promoting language proficiency, improving library facilities to create inviting reading spaces, providing economic support to families, and encouraging responsible gadget usage among students. By addressing both internal and external factors, educators and stakeholders can work towards nurturing a culture of reading and lifelong learning among Class VIII middle school students.

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