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## The Influence of Children's Storybooks on Reading Interest in Elementary Schools

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### Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effect of children's storybooks on elementary school students' reading interest. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group design. The participants consisted of 54 fourth-grade students aged 9–10 years from a public elementary school in Indonesia, consisting of 25 males and 29 females. The students were divided into three groups: 18 students in the control class, 18 in experimental class 1, and 18 in experimental class 2. Data were collected using a reading interest questionnaire administered during pretest and posttest, supported by observation and documentation. The data were analyzed quantitatively using paired samples t-tests to examine within-group differences and additional analyses, including independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA, to compare differences between groups. The results showed no significant difference in the reading interest of students in the control class. In contrast, significant improvements were found in both experimental classes after the implementation of children's storybooks. Furthermore, the between-group analysis indicated that the experimental groups demonstrated greater improvement compared to the control group. These findings suggest that the use of children's storybooks has a positive and statistically significant effect on improving students' reading interest. Therefore, children's storybooks can be considered an effective instructional medium to enhance reading interest among elementary school students.

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### 1. Introduction

Reading is an activity that determines the success of the desired learning process (Faradina, 2017). (Dalman, 2014) states that reading is a cognitive process aimed at acquiring various knowledge and information in written form. Therefore, reading becomes a thought process aimed at understanding the content of a text being read. Reading is not merely viewing a collection of letters formed into words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or even discourses. It is more than that; reading is the activity of understanding and interpreting meaningful symbols/signs/writing so that the author's message is well received by the reader. By making reading a habit, we can learn about various things and events in a location simply by reading without having to go there in person (Maharani et al., 2024). We can learn about the environment and conditions of a country through

reading, even if we have never been there (Koumpouros, 2024). Good reading habits will also determine a strong interest in reading.

Interest in reading is characterized by a strong willingness to carry out reading activities. Interest is demonstrated through an expression that indicates a shared desire, and can also be demonstrated through participation in an activity (Pulungan et al., 2022; Sudarsana, 2014). Interest has a strong impact on the cognitive and affective aspects of reading, influencing how we think and feel about what we read (Renninger & Bachrach, 2015). Reading interest enhances each person's personal identity; increasing reading interest requires individual attention (Kasiyun, 2015). Students must be able to identify reading material, both experientially and ideologically. When a reading text doesn't make sense to students, they will lose interest in reading. If this lack of interest persists, even for a short time, many students will stop reading (Ortlieb, 2010; Wyse & Bradbury, 2022). Teachers can increase reading interest in classroom learning activities by recommending books to students. Teachers should also select texts with a variety of genres to expand students' reading and choose topics that interest them (Springer et al., 2017).

A survey by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) reveals that Indonesia has the lowest reading interest among ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries. This low reading interest is evidenced by Indonesia's reading index, which is only around 0.001, meaning that out of every 1,000 people, only one person has a strong interest in reading. This figure is significantly lower than Singapore's reading index, which is 0.45 (Amrulloh, 2023). Building on the importance of interactive literacy experiences, the role of parents and teachers becomes essential in supporting young children's language and character development through meaningful engagement. (Harefa et al., 2025) found that parents and teachers help young children develop language and character not just by having books, but through quality interactions like shared reading, storytelling, and daily use of picture storybooks with interactive methods. In line with this, (Caliskan & Ulas, 2022) found that it can be argued that parents play a crucial role in shaping children's reading attitudes, as positive emotional and behavioral support from families—demonstrated through active involvement in shared reading, guiding comprehension activities, and consistent participation over time—can significantly foster more positive attitudes toward reading.

Preliminary research through interviews with homeroom teachers indicates that students are enthusiastic about reading when these activities are incorporated into classroom learning. However, the reading materials available are primarily limited to textbooks, resulting in fewer opportunities for students to engage with a variety of stories. This limitation restricts students to reading only the textbook-provided content. One factor contributing to low reading interest is the absence of a reading habit from childhood, which often hinders the development of a love for reading (Manis, 2010; Spufford, 2026). Children's stories can help foster imagination, broaden students' perspectives, and support emotional, cognitive, and psychomotor development. They also serve as effective tools for learning and instilling character values, stimulating imagination, and inspiring new ideas. To directly address the problem of low reading interest, (Marhamah, 2022) conducted an experiment demonstrating that using picture storybooks significantly increased elementary students' reading interest, which is supported by expert validation showing high feasibility scores (81% from material experts and 78% from media experts, with the presentation suitability for student-centered learning at 68%). Moreover, to maximize the effectiveness of picture storybooks, (Zheng et al., 2025) found that interactive storytelling strategies—such as joint reading, lively discussion, role-play, and guided questioning help young learners deepen narrative understanding, build early literacy skills, and increase reading interest, especially when picture storybooks serve as teaching tools that blend visual cues with familiar experiences.

Given the above, reading interest is a crucial factor in elementary students' learning success. Utilizing engaging, understandable, and age-appropriate children's stories can help increase reading interest. However, previous studies on children's stories and reading interest have predominantly focused on early childhood or middle/high school settings, with limited attention to elementary-aged learners. Findings remain inconsistent: while some research reports positive effects of story-based interventions on reading motivation, others show negligible or short-lived

impacts, often due to variations in story complexity or delivery methods. Moreover, a notable contextual gap exists, as most studies have been conducted in Western or non-Indonesian Asian settings; little is known about the unique linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical factors influencing the effectiveness of children's stories in Indonesian elementary schools. Methodologically, prior work has heavily relied on correlational or pre-experimental designs without adequate control groups, limiting causal inferences about the role of children's stories in improving reading interest. To address these gaps, this study employs a quasi-experimental research design with a non-equivalent control group design to systematically examine how locally relevant children's stories influence reading interest among Indonesian elementary students, thereby assessing their effectiveness as an alternative learning strategy within this under-researched context.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1 Participants**

The subjects in this study were elementary school students divided into three groups. The control group consisted of 18 students, experimental group 1 consisted of 18 students, and experimental group 2 consisted of 18 students. Thus, the total number of research subjects was 54 students. The control group was given reading lessons as usual by the teacher without using children's stories as a specific medium. Meanwhile, experimental group 1 and experimental group 2 were given treatment in the form of reading lessons using children's stories as a learning medium. The difference in treatment in the two experimental groups was carried out to determine the effectiveness of using children's stories in increasing students' interest in reading.

### **2.2 Data Collection**

#### **2.2.1 Instrument of Collecting Data**

This type of research is the quasi-experimental research design with a non-equivalent control group design (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The instruments used in this study were designed to measure students' reading interest and support the data collection process. The main instrument was a reading interest questionnaire, which was administered to the students during the pretest and posttest. The questionnaire consisted of several statements related to students' reading habits, their interest in reading materials, and their attitudes toward reading activities. The responses from the questionnaire were used to determine the level of students' reading interest before and after the treatment. In addition, an observation sheet was used to record students' participation, enthusiasm, and engagement during the learning process when children's storybooks were implemented in the classroom.

#### **2.2.2 Techniques for Collecting Data**

Several techniques were used to collect the data in this study. First, the questionnaire technique was applied to measure students' reading interest before and after the treatment. The questionnaire was distributed to all students in the control group, experimental group 1, and experimental group 2 during both the pretest and posttest stages. Second, observation was conducted during the teaching and learning process to directly examine students' participation and engagement in reading activities using children's stories. This technique allowed the researcher to observe changes in students' behavior, such as their enthusiasm, attention, and participation during the learning activities. Third, documentation was used to support the research data, including students' lists, the number of participants, and records of learning activities conducted during the research process.

### **2.3 Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively to determine the effect of using children's storybook on elementary school students' reading interest. First, the scores from each response in the reading interest questionnaire were calculated to obtain the total score for each student in both the pretest and posttest. After that, the mean scores of the pretest and posttest for each group (control group, experimental group 1, and experimental group 2) were calculated to identify differences in students' reading interest before and after the treatment. The

results of the pretest and posttest were then compared to determine whether there was an improvement in students' reading interest after the implementation of children's stories in the learning process.

Furthermore, the data were analyzed using a paired samples t-test to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores within each group. This statistical test was used to examine the effect of the treatment by comparing students' reading interest before and after the implementation of children's storybook. Through this analysis, the researcher was able to determine whether the use of children's storybook significantly improved the reading interest of elementary school students.

### 3. Results

The results of students' social awareness character were obtained using questionnaires and observations of students.

#### 3.1 Scale Data

The scale used was 1 to 4, with categories ranging from always to never. The maximum score received by each student was 52 points, and the minimum score was 13 points.

##### 3.1.1 Control Class

In the control class, measurements were conducted on 18 students in class A. Table 2 shows a summary of the reading interest results in the control class.

**Table 1**  
*Reading Interest Scale Scores in the Control Class*

Reading Interest Scale Scores in the Control Class		
	Pretest	Posttest
Lowest Score	41	31
Highest Score	61	50
Average	51	52,02

The table 1 shows that the average initial score for students was 51, with the highest score being 61 and the lowest score being 41. After five learning activities, the average score was 52.02, with the highest score being 50 and the lowest score being 31. These results indicate that there was no significant change in students' reading interest in the control class.

##### 3.1.2 Experimental Class

In experimental class 1, 18 students from class B participated in experimental class 1. The following is a summary of the results of the social concern character scale scores in experimental class 1, presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Reading Interest Scale Scores for Experimental Class 1*

Reading Interest Scale Scores for Experimental Class 1		
	Pretest	Posttest
Lowest Score	40	48
Highest Score	62	63
Average	51,61	58,22

Table 2 shows that the average initial score for students was 51.61, with the highest score being 62 and the lowest score being 46. After five learning activities, the average score was 58.22, with the highest score being 63 and the lowest score being 48. These results indicate a significant change in students' reading interest in experimental class 1.

**Table 3**  
*Reading Interest Scale Score for Experimental Class 2*

Reading Interest Scale Score for Experimental Class 2		
	Pretest	Posttest
Lowest Score	40	45

Highest Score	64	65
Average	50,66	55

Table 3 shows that the average initial score for students was 50.66, with the highest score being 64 and the lowest score being 40. After five learning activities, the average score was 55, with the highest score being 65 and the lowest score being 45. These results indicate a significant change in students' reading interest in experimental class 2.

### 3.2 Paired Samples t-Test

To determine whether there was a difference in students' reading interest before and after using children's storybooks, a paired-sample t-test was used. The paired-sample t-test was conducted using SPSS 21.0 for Windows. If the sig. < 0.05,  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted. If the sig. > 0.05,  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_a$  is rejected. The table shows a summary of the results of the paired-sample t-test on students' reading interest.

**Table 4**  
*Paired-Sample t-Test for Social Concern Character*

No.	Data	Sig. Value
1.	Pretest Control – Posttest Control	.484
2.	Pretest Experiment 1 – Posttest Experiment 1	.001
3.	Pretest Experiment 2 – Posttest Experiment 2	.048

The study tested the hypothesis that there is no difference in students' reading interest between those who use children's storybooks and those who do not ( $H_0$ ), against the alternative hypothesis that a difference does exist ( $H_a$ ). Based on the results presented in Table 4, different patterns were observed across the groups. In the control class, the findings indicate no significant difference in students' reading interest, meaning that  $H_0$  is accepted. This suggests that without the use of children's storybooks, students' reading interest remains relatively unchanged. In contrast, both experimental class 1 and experimental class 2 show a significant difference in students' reading interest. Therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted for these groups. This indicates that the use of children's storybooks has a meaningful impact on improving students' reading interest. Overall, these findings suggest that incorporating children's storybooks into the learning process is an effective strategy for enhancing students' reading interest. The absence of change in the control class further strengthens the conclusion that the improvement observed in the experimental classes is likely due to the intervention rather than external factors.

### 3.3 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

To examine the differences in students' reading interest among the three groups, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted based on the posttest scores. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.**  
*One-Way ANOVA Results*

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	512.37	2	256.18	6.87	0.002
Within Groups	1902.63	51	37.30		
Total	2415.00	53			

The hypotheses tested in this study were formulated as follows:  
 $H_0$ : There is no significant difference in students' reading interest among the control class, experimental class 1, and experimental class 2.  
 $H_1$ : There is a significant difference in students' reading interest among the control class, experimental class 1, and experimental class 2.

Based on Table 1, the ANOVA results showed that the significance value was 0.002, which is lower than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative

hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in students' reading interest among the three groups. To further identify which groups differed significantly, a post hoc test using Tukey HSD was conducted. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the control class and experimental class 1 ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, a significant difference was found between the control class and experimental class 2 ( $p < 0.01$ ), as well as between experimental class 1 and experimental class 2 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Experimental class 2 showed the highest mean score, indicating the greatest improvement in reading interest. These findings confirm that the implementation of children's storybooks had a significant effect on students' reading interest, particularly in experimental class 2.

#### **4. Discussion**

The use of children's storybooks was implemented during five lessons. Students' reading interest showed an increase, as evidenced by the results of a paired-sample t-test, which indicated a change in students' reading interest after storybooks were provided in the experimental class. This refers to the significant results for experimental class 1 and experimental class 2, which were less than 0.05. This contrasted with the control class, which, based on the results of the paired-sample t-test, showed a score greater than 0.05, indicating no difference in students' reading interest during the five lessons conducted without storybooks. In addition to the within-group analysis, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in reading interest among the three groups. The results revealed a statistically significant difference ( $F(2, 51) = 6.87, p < 0.05$ ), indicating that the treatments given to each group resulted in different levels of reading interest. Based on the hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which states that there is no significant difference among groups, was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was accepted. Overall, these findings indicate that the use of children's storybooks not only improves students' reading interest within groups but also produces significantly different outcomes between groups, thereby strengthening the evidence of its effectiveness as an instructional medium in elementary education.

The storybooks featured engaging images and compelling storylines, and the chosen topics increased students' interest in reading. Based on the research results, the use of children's stories in the learning process has been shown to have a positive impact on the reading interests of elementary school students. This is evident in the increased student interest in participating in reading activities after teachers used children's stories as a learning medium. Children's stories have characteristics appropriate to the developmental age of elementary school students, such as simple language, engaging storylines, and the presence of easily understood images and moral messages. These characteristics make it easier for students to understand the content of reading and feel more interested in reading. This interest is a crucial factor in fostering students' interest in reading.

Furthermore, the use of children's stories can also create a more enjoyable learning environment. When reading activities are packaged through engaging stories, students don't feel burdened. Instead, they become more active, enthusiastic, and eager to learn more about the story. This demonstrates that children's stories can be an effective medium for fostering reading habits in students. Research also shows that students retain reading content more easily when presented in story format (Williamson et al., 2023). This is because stories have a coherent plot and characters that help students understand and connect the events within the story. Thus, the use of children's stories not only increases reading interest but also helps improve students' comprehension.

The results of this study align with research by (Tarigan, 2019), which shows that picture books are effective in increasing students' interest in reading. Books with many attractive pictures will engage students in viewing and reading. The integration of images and text is crucial in conveying meaning, thus increasing reading interest (Yum et al., 2021). An engaging storyline or fairy tale is also one of the reasons students continue reading the storybooks or fairy tales they read. The topic chosen for reading material also influences a person's reading interest (Rosli et al., 2017). Reading interest is not something that can be easily changed in a short time. Helping students develop and maintain an interest in reading is a major challenge for teachers (Noortyani, 2018).

Thus, it can be concluded that children's stories play a crucial role in increasing students' reading interest in elementary schools. Therefore, teachers are advised to utilize children's stories more frequently as a learning medium, especially in reading activities, to increase students' interest and habituate to reading from an early age.

## 5. Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that the use of children's storybooks is associated with improvements in elementary school students' reading interest, though causal claims must be made with caution. This study involved three groups, namely a control class, experimental class 1, and experimental class 2. The results of the analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the reading interest of students in the control class because they did not receive treatment using children's storybooks. In contrast, experimental class 1 and experimental class 2 showed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results after the implementation of children's storybooks in the learning process. Interpretatively, these results imply that children's storybooks may enhance reading interest by capturing students' attention and fostering intrinsic motivation, thereby increasing their engagement with reading activities. However, several limitations should be acknowledged, including the relatively short intervention period, the specific sample of elementary school students, and the absence of long-term follow-up to assess the durability of the observed effects. In terms of implications, the findings suggest that children's storybooks can serve as a promising learning medium for promoting reading interest at the elementary level. Practically, educators are encouraged to integrate such storybooks into regular literacy instruction, and parents are encouraged to use children's storybooks during shared reading at home to reinforce reading habits outside of school. Additionally, curriculum developers should consider expanding access to diverse storybook resources for both classroom and home settings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and more diverse samples to further validate and extend these findings.

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