

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN ENCOURAGING CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN READING AT PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the role of parents in encouraging primary school-aged children to enjoy reading using descriptive methods. Data were collected through interviews with five parents, who discussed the frequency of reading with their children, motivational techniques, children's emotional states, and the role of the school environment and social support. The results indicated that parents' reading habits, a supportive home environment, and the selection of exciting books played essential roles in developing children's love of reading. Although there were differences in reading preferences between school days and holidays, strategies such as maintaining regular schedules and providing positive motivation helped overcome these challenges. The role of schools was also considered necessary, including giving facilities and attractive reading materials. The study highlights the importance of parent and community involvement in supporting the development of children's reading interests.

Keywords: *Children's Reading Interests, Parental Role, Primary Education, Environmental Support, Reading Motivation*

Introduction

In the digital age, fostering a love of reading in children is becoming increasingly important, especially given the alarming reading rates reported by UNESCO (2021) in Indonesia, where only 0.001% of Indonesians are regular readers. This statistic highlights the crucial need to develop children's reading skills, particularly during the primary school years, as this period is fundamental for forming lifelong reading habits that improve reading ability and broaden understanding, perspectives, and critical thinking skills. Several theories support the importance of early interest in reading. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interactions in cognitive development, while Piaget's (1952) constructivist theory supports the idea that children construct their understanding through active interaction with their environment. Self-determination theory underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Bowlby (1969) highlights how reading together can strengthen the emotional bond between parent and child.

Parents play a crucial role in shaping children's reading preferences. Bandura's (1977) suggests that children learn behaviours by observing and imitating their caregivers, while Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory posits that multiple environmental systems, including the family environment, influence children's development. Leu et al. (2013) emphasize balancing digital and traditional reading formats in the digital age. Parallel to the importance of fostering reading habits, the global significance of English language skills cannot be overstated.

In the era of globalization, especially in the 21st century, English has become a critical language. Rao (2019) states that English is a common language worldwide despite variations in habits, cultures, and traditions. Boraie (2018) emphasizes that English is today's global lingua franca, driven by education, science, and technology, and is considered essential in employment, media, and education. Ibrohimova and Ziyaboyeva (2022) highlight the pivotal role of English in job opportunities, global mobility, and access to information. The importance of English has led many countries to introduce English teaching in primary schools. As Butler (2013) mentions, countries where English is taught as a foreign language have begun introducing it at earlier grade levels in their curricula. This global phenomenon is due to the

emergence of English as a world language, which is widely spread across the globe. Brown (2007) notes that English has increasingly become an international language for communication, transportation, commerce, banking, tourism, technology, diplomacy, and scientific research.

Experts suggest that English education would be ideal, especially before children turn 12. Cameron (2001) states that young children can learn a second language particularly effectively before puberty because their brains can still use the mechanism that assists first language acquisition. Ytreberg & Scott (1990) emphasize that children between four and eleven years old are in the most vital years of their development, often referred to as the "golden age" for language acquisition. In conclusion, developing reading habits and English language skills from an early age is crucial in today's globalized world. We can equip children with the necessary tools to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and knowledge-driven society by fostering a love for reading and introducing English education early.

Method

This study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to further explore the role of parents in promoting reading interest in primary school children. The study population consisted of parents of primary school students (grades 1 to 6) in the Pacitan area. On Saturday, July 20, 2024, data were collected using the primary technique of in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide, which included questions about reading habits at home, the role of parents in reading with their children, their opinions on the importance of literacy, and the obstacles they faced. Research instruments in the form of interview guides were used to ensure comprehensive and structured data collection. Qualitative data from interviews were identified and analyzed to develop an in-depth understanding of the role of parents in fostering reading interest in primary school children. The data collected from these interviews provided a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the factors that influence the role of parents in fostering a love of reading in children.

Findings and Discussions

The Role of Parents in Encouraging Children to Love Reading at Primary School Age

The reading frequency varied greatly between parents: Parent 1 read together twice a week, Parent 2 every day for homework, Parent 3 three times a week, Parent 4 four times a week, and Parent 5 every day. The frequency of reading together varied greatly, and most parents did it regularly. Parents 1 and 3 read less frequently than Parents 4 and 5. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), a higher frequency of shared reading can strengthen children's reading skills. Consistency in reading activities is essential for children's literacy development. French Regarding distractions, Parent 1 reported that their child was easily distracted by TV or mobile phones, while Parent 2 had no problems due to having adequate reading devices. Parent 3 noted that mobile phones were frequent distractions, Parent 4 reported mobile phones and televisions, and Parent 5 mentioned friends and mobile phones as common distractions. Distractions from digital devices such as mobile phones and televisions affected most children.

According to Orenstein (2013), distractions from digital media can affect children's reading concentration. Managing screen time appropriately and providing a distraction-free environment can help reduce children's ability to concentrate due to external distractions. Regarding reading motivation, parent 1 provided engaging storybooks, and parent 2 provided age-appropriate educational materials such as Smart Hafiz, parent 3 read stories that the child liked, parent 4 provided engaging storybooks, and parent 5 invited regular reading sessions. Parents use various ways to encourage their children to read, including providing them with exciting books and educational tools, according to the theory of intrinsic motivation by Deci

and Ryan (1985), highlighting the importance of children's interests in developing reading habits. Providing materials that match children's interests can increase reading motivation. Children's emotional states also play a role in their reading experiences. Parent 1's child enjoyed reading and shared stories with friends. Parent 2's child was emotionally unstable but still able to absorb the content. Parent 3's child was enthusiastic when in a good mood. Parent 4 managed the child's emotional state by reading together, and Parent 5 noted that mood significantly influenced reading. Children's emotional states influenced their reading experiences. Pekrun (2002) emphasized that emotions play an essential role in learning.

Children who are enthusiastic and emotionally healthy tend to enjoy reading more. Emotional support from parents, such as spending time alone reading, can help control children's emotional disturbances. Finally, the role modelling of reading habits varied: parent 1 invited their child to read with them, parent 2 read alongside them, parent 3 encouraged imitation by reading everything around them, parent 4 read regularly, and parent 5 invited their child to regular reading sessions. Role modelling when it comes to reading habits will have a positive impact on children's habits. Bandura (1977) proposed an advanced theory of social learning that suggests that children often imitate the behaviour of adults around them and those they observe. Parents who are active readers and enjoy reading activities can encourage their children to participate.

Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Parents' Role in Shaping Children's Interest in Reading

Factors influencing the effectiveness of parents' role in shaping children's interest in reading include various factors such as environmental factors and family support. Parent 1 believes that ecological factors significantly influence, while Parent 2 emphasizes that family environmental factors are the strongest. Parent 3 believes that family support has a significant influence, Parent 4 also considers environmental factors to be influential, and Parent 5 mentions the factor of reading digital media or the Internet. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believes that interaction with the environment, including family, significantly influences children's development. Regarding the influence of parents and work on reading time, Parent 1 believes that work does not affect her because she has enough time to encourage her children to read. In contrast, Parent 2 admits that it sometimes has an influence but does not affect daily learning activities. Parent 3 said that her work was not concerned because she was a housewife, while Parent 4 admitted that it was affected but tried to arrange time for reading activities.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) pointed out that parents' participation in reading activities can be hindered by work, but efforts are being made to overcome these barriers. Regarding the home environment that supports reading habits, Parent 1 emphasized the importance of a comfortable reading place and encouragement for children to read. At the same time, Parent 2 noted that family support, such as parents and reading facilities, play an important role. Parent 3 mentioned a comfortable bedroom, Parent 4 emphasized the socialization of the environment, especially in the home environment, and Parent 5 noted the importance of familiarizing children with reading while studying. Anderson (1985) pointed out that environmental support, including good reading facilities, contributes significantly to children's reading habits.

Regarding differences in reading preferences between school days and holidays, Parent 1 noted that her child preferred to play during the holidays and addressed this by establishing a consistent reading schedule. Parent 2 explained that their child read texts at school, while at home, they read stories or stories about people worldwide. Parent 3 mentioned that their child preferred to play during the holidays and tried to balance this by establishing a reading schedule. Parent 4 noticed decreased reading during the holidays and addressed this by providing motivation. Parent 5 reported difficulties with reading during the holidays and addressed this by giving their child attention or encouraging them to read more.

Deci and Ryan's (1985) suggest that children's reading preferences can be maintained by providing exciting and relevant experiences, ensuring that reading activities remain enjoyable during school and holidays. All parents agreed that schools are essential in supporting their children's love of reading. Parent 1 mentioned that the school provides a library with various exciting books, and Parent 2 added that the school offers a library and other types of books. Parent 3 also mentioned that the library has interesting books, while Parent 4 emphasized that the school is an environment that encourages reading outside the home. Parent 5 said the school provides a library, and teachers set a timetable to promote reading. Home literacy is also important to be developed at home. The study explores key aspects of the Home Literacy Environment, including family resources like the number of books, parental education levels, and the language spoken at home. It also examines parental literacy behaviors and attitudes, such as how often parents read, their attitudes toward reading, and their involvement in reading activities with their children. Additionally, the study looks at parental beliefs and understandings regarding the importance of reading, their confidence in helping with homework, and their knowledge of reading instruction methods. Lastly, it considers family literacy activities, such as shared reading sessions and discussions about books (Apriyanti et al., 2019).

Conclusion

From the interviews taken, the role of parents is vital in encouraging interest in reading in children from primary school age. Parents who spend time reading with their children, provide them with exciting books, and create a home environment that encourages reading habits tend to succeed in increasing children's interest in reading. In addition, the role of schools as library providers and a supportive environment also contributes significantly. Consistency in reading activities and parents' efforts to be role models through their reading habits are very helpful in maintaining children's love for reading, even though children are easily distracted by other devices or activities.

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