



Analysis of Reading Difficulties by Primary School Students: A Case Study The Third Grade Students Rural Area

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a fundamental skill for human development and has a direct impact on learners' cognitive growth. Reading ability remains a major concern, especially in primary education within developing and underdeveloped countries. This study aims to identify the reading difficulties experienced by elementary school students. A qualitative research method was employed, using structured interviews with five parents whose children were identified as having reading difficulties. The use of structured interviews ensured consistency in the responses collected. The findings revealed that third-grade students face challenges in spelling, letter recognition, and reading fluency. These difficulties are often worsened by both cognitive and contextual factors, particularly low parental involvement and an unsupportive home environment. The study implies that improving parental engagement and implementing effective strategies at home are essential for supporting children's reading development. Educational stakeholders, including schools and policymakers, should consider providing guidance and resources for parents to create a more literacy-rich home environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, reading is a fundamental ability that all elementary school students must possess since it allows them to learn a great deal about a variety of other subjects. Thus, reading is a skill that children need to learn from a young age. Children who are not able to read by the time they are in elementary school may struggle greatly in the subsequent grades as they learn different subjects. Children must so learn to read in order to read to learn. A student's primary responsibility is to study. Learning may happen with anybody, anywhere, and at any time. Students' experiences learning at school and in their own homes or families truly determine whether they succeed or fail in reaching their educational objectives (Shah, 2012). According to Slameto (2010), learning is the process by which an individual works to alter his behavior overall as a result of his interactions with his surroundings.

The most significant aspect of a student's life is learning to read since it is the first step toward a systematic understanding of the learning process and one of the keys to their success when they participate in it in the classroom, where teachers and students interact. The achievement of educational objectives is actually determined by the learning components of teachers and pupils. The reading itself has numerous definition such Masykuri (2019) mentioned that reading is a cognitive activity that aims to extract and grasp all of the information contained in written texts. According to this viewpoint, reading is an active activity of thought rather than only the passive recognition or observation of words. In order to comprehend the meaning that the author wishes to express, readers use their cognitive faculties to decipher and comprehend meaningful signs, symbols, and inscriptions. In this way, reading is a complex process of decoding and comprehension since it fills the gap between the author's ideas and the reader's comprehension. The majority of pupils typically begin learning to read between the ages of five and six. It's true that some pupils pick things up more quickly than others, and some pupils aren't able to read by the age of seven. Only until a child is seven or eight years old can it be said that they struggle with reading, since they are typically able to read on their own without assistance. Psychological statement also mentioned by Rakimahwati et al (2018) that emphasized reading for children as an activity that involves the body and soul to obtain the meaning in the writing and to identify letters. Reading is said to be a physical activity because it involves the eyes to carry out the reading process. It is also said to be a mental activity because the mind, perception and memory are involved in reading.

This study is attempted to identify reading difficulties of elementary students. The identification of reading difficulties could beneficially to for educational stakeholder to provide proper learning strategy that can stimulate reading skills of students. As is well known, pupils who struggle with reading may experience detrimental effects on both their academic performance and mental health. Students that struggle with reading experience low self-esteem, which lowers their willingness to learn (Rafika, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Reading Difficulties

Reading difficulties are a significant challenge in primary education that can affect students' academic and emotional development. Research indicates that these difficulties often stem from a lack of phonological awareness which is the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language. A previous study conducted by Bahrudin et al (2021) found that 81% of students with reading difficulties experience problems with phonological awareness, which hinders their ability to recognize and form written words. In addition,

emotional factors such as anxiety also play a role in reading difficulties. Research by Grills-Taquechel et al (2012) revealed a correlation between anxiety and reading problems in elementary school students, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach in addressing this issue.

Several factors can contribute to reading difficulties among primary school students, ranging from cognitive to environmental influences. Apart from phonological awareness and emotional factors, limitations in vocabulary knowledge, working memory, and attention span also play a crucial role in reading development (Oakhill & Cain, 2007). Socioeconomic background is another influential factor, as students from low-income families may have limited access to reading materials and early literacy experiences, which can delay reading acquisition (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Additionally, inadequate instructional methods or lack of individualized support in the classroom can exacerbate reading challenges, especially for learners with diverse needs. Understanding these multifaceted causes is crucial for designing comprehensive and equitable reading programs that support all learners, particularly those at risk of falling behind.

Investigating students' reading difficulties is essential for the development of effective instructional strategies and targeted interventions. Early identification allows educators to address underlying issues such as phonological deficits, language processing problems, or emotional barriers before they significantly hinder academic progress. As suggested by Snowling and Hulme (2012), comprehensive assessments that include both cognitive and emotional components can provide a clearer picture of a student's reading profile, leading to more personalized and effective support. Moreover, understanding the root causes of reading struggles can help prevent long-term academic disengagement and foster a more inclusive learning environment where all students can thrive.

2.2. Students Reading Abilities

Reading activities are the ability to remember graphic symbols in the form of letters, remember the sounds of writing graphic symbols in a series of words and sentences that contain meaning (Aydın & BağcıAyrancı, 2018; Nugrahanto & Zuchdi, 2019). Cognitive capacity is the cornerstone of reading proficiency (Bursali & Yilmaz, 2019; Rajab & Al-Sadi, 2015). Approximately 70% of primary school pupils need remedial reading instruction in some capacity, according to earlier studies (Calhoon et al., 2010). The ability to focus attention is an activity in reading, without this ability it is difficult for someone to assemble graphic symbols in the form of letters into words or sentences that contain meaning (Akin et al., 2015; Memiş & Kandemir, 2019). The perceptive processes that contribute to the development of reading ability, such as auditory and visual discrimination and the capacity to combine visual and auditory discrimination, are a component of reading ability (Kurniawati & Koeswanti, 2020). This leads to the influence of cognitive and perceptual processes on reading ability. In actuality, though, pupils in lower grades continue to struggle with reading the final consonants and differentiating between letter shapes (Amini & Suyadi, 2020; Christianti, 2013). A lot of people still struggle with the idea of alphabets and symbols (Darnis, 2018; Rekysika & Haryanto, 2019).

These challenges underscore the necessity for structured and systematic reading instruction from an early age that not only focuses on decoding but also nurtures the cognitive and perceptual skills essential for reading success. Interventions should be tailored to meet the developmental level of each student, incorporating exercises that strengthen memory, attention span, and discrimination skills. According to Ehri (2005), systematic phonics

instruction that gradually introduces letter-sound relationships helps learners build automaticity in word recognition, which is crucial for reading fluency. Moreover, incorporating games, visual aids, and auditory activities can support learners who struggle with symbol recognition and discrimination. When these instructional strategies are implemented consistently and monitored closely, they can significantly enhance reading outcomes, particularly for those students who face early reading challenges due to cognitive and perceptual limitations.

3. METHOD

This type of study employs qualitative research techniques. According to Sugiyono (2009), the research technique utilizes natural object conditions, where the researcher serves as the primary instrument, triangulation is used for data collecting, inductive analysis is utilized for data processing, and the results highlight the significance of generalization. The methodology used in this study is qualitative. Descriptive research is the approach that researchers used. In descriptive research, occurrences that happen in the field are described rather than hypotheses being tested. Analyzing reading challenges in pupils and speaking with parents about these issues are the primary goals of this study.

This study was conducted in the even semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. The SD Negeri 104202 (Elementary/Primary Schools) was selected as the location of this study with several considerations. According to preliminary observations at SD Negeri 104202 Bandar Setia, it indicated that some students still struggle with reading, particularly in grade three, where there are 25 pupils. Out of 25 pupils, there are 5 pupils have not yet attained reading proficiency. According to this number of student that has difficulty in reading. We used their parents as the informant in this study (5 persons). Based on previous information, we select the subject of this study by using purposive sampling technique. The data were collected using a structured interview technique. This method was chosen to ensure that clear and straightforward questions were provided to the research participants. The use of structured interviews helps to maintain consistency in the questions asked.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result

The number of children with each reading ability was determined by looking at the results of teacher interviews. However, five pupils with extremely low reading abilities were chosen as research participants after the grade three primary school teacher in Bandar Setia took into account the students' reading challenges. According to the overall findings of parent interviews about the challenges children face when reading, it appears that the home environment and atmosphere are still insufficient and uncomfortable for children to learn, they are still unable to spell, and they are unable to read words for words. Following parent interviews, a picture of the factors that contribute to children's reading difficulties was gathered. These factors include: children's lack of interest in learning and their laziness in repeating the provided school material; the unsupportive home and school environments; and children's rapid boredom when reading.

Table 1. The interview Result

No	Interview Questions	Responses
1.	How is the atmosphere at home when reading? Do you follow any particular routines or habits to help your child in reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Respondent 1</i> "The reading atmosphere at home is very adequate. I even got my child used to rereading his school books, but the child himself also lacks interest in reading" • <i>Respondent 2</i> "The reading atmosphere at home is less supportive because I have younger siblings who often invite me to play and also rarely open school books" • <i>Respondent 3</i> "The atmosphere at home is comfortable, I set aside special time every day to read with my children, provide support and involve them in discussions about the books they read at school" • <i>Respondent 4</i> "As a routine habit, I always invite my children to re-read school books, but sometimes the atmosphere at home is less comfortable because my nephew at home always asks me to play" • <i>Respondent 5</i> "Often invite him to study together and repeat the material that has been taught at school, but children also easily get bored studying at home"
2.	Do you observe any particular barriers or challenges that pupils have when they read? Was there extra assistance given, or how did the youngster get beyond these obstacles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Respondent 1</i> "The problem of children not being able to recognize some letters is to overcome difficulties in reading. Sometimes my child also asks me to help him read" • <i>Respondent 2</i> "The obstacle of children not being able to spell letters is to overcome their difficulty in reading. Parents also teach us to read slowly" • <i>Respondent 3</i> "The problem is that you can recognize letters but you can't spell them and you have to spell them with one letter. We as parents also provide assistance by providing letter recognition books to study again" • <i>Respondent 4</i> "From the obstacles that I see, my child still spells slowly and he still has to read slowly" • <i>Respondent 5</i> "The problem my child faces is that he has difficulty memorizing letters and doesn't really know how to spell"
3.	What initiatives or methods have been used to assist pupils in developing their reading abilities? What is the child's reaction to these attempts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Respondent 1</i> "The efforts that parents make for their children, sometimes I give them story books so that they don't get bored of reading, but because of their friends, they quickly get bored of reading" • <i>Respondent 2</i> "Efforts are made to provide support to children so that they can read" • <i>Respondent 3</i> "Sometimes I give him a book like a level book so that he remembers the letters again and is easy to remember"

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| 4. What aspects of a child's life affect their interest in reading? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Respondent 4</i> "As parents, we often tell him to learn to read and write by spelling slowly, like taking dictation at school" • <i>Respondent 5</i> "The efforts given by us as parents encourage him to learn to read, learn to spell letters by dictating letters to him" |
| 5. Are there certain steps that will be taken to help the child overcome reading difficulties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Respondent 1</i> "The factor is that sometimes siblings come to the house, this is also one of the main factors that makes children disturb their concentration when reading, they prefer to play with their friends, they have no interest in reading" • <i>Respondent 2</i> "Factors that influence children's difficulty in reading are because they mostly play with their friends, environmental factors around the house that are not yet supportive" • <i>Respondent 3</i> "The factor is that these children get bored more quickly with reading and learn from that boredom which influences children to read more slowly" • <i>Respondent 4</i> "Preferring to play with friends rather than environmental factors at home is one of the reasons why children are slow to read" • <i>Respondent 5</i> "The factors are many, especially lazy studying, playing with friends" • <i>Respondent 1</i> "As parents, we sometimes don't allow them to play with their friends so that their children can also focus on studying and reading" • <i>Respondent 2</i> "The steps given by parents are always to admonish children to always read school books" • <i>Respondent 3</i> "Sometimes I'm also tired of seeing my child prefer to play and scold him, which is not good, so sometimes I invite him to read and learn spelling from level books or from school books" • <i>Respondent 4</i> "As his parent, I always advise him, like a little brother, if he wants to be smart at school, not like his friends, if he wants to be smart, open lots of books, repeat the material given by the teacher at school, don't play too much" • <i>Respondent 5</i> "Inviting him to study with me, his mother in the room taught him to spell slowly" |
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4.2. Discussion

The research subjects were chosen based on the findings of observations and interviews, which were then used to classify children who struggled with reading. Each student's reading difficulties are taken into consideration when choosing their subjects. Aside from that, the third-grade elementary school teacher's considerations are the basis for subject selection. Five pupils with challenging reading skills were identified based on these findings. Data on third-grade pupils' reading challenges was gathered through observations and conversations

with the homeroom teacher. Following that, parents of students in the designated subjects were interviewed and given a reading difficulty questionnaire. Both of the third-grade pupils' reading levels are categorized as "Not good" based on the data analysis results from these subjects. The difficulties faced by the students is lack of familiarity with letters, difficulty spelling, difficulty and errors in reading syllables, difficulty distinguishing letters and words that were almost the same, doubts in reading.

The interviews' results show a number of important conclusions about the reading environment at home, the difficulties children have in reading, the efforts parents make, the factors influencing reading interest, and the actions done to help children who struggle with reading.

4.2.1. Home Reading Atmosphere and Routines

Respondents' home reading environments differ greatly from one another. A supportive environment that encourages reading habits like rereading school books and allocating daily reading time is described by some parents, including Respondents 1 and 3. By including their child in conversations about the books, Respondent 3 exemplifies a collaborative approach and establishes a welcoming and engaging learning environment. Distractions, especially from younger siblings or nephews, are mentioned by additional respondents (2, 4, and 5) as a reason why reading routines are less effective and difficult to focus on. Respondent 2 mentions, for instance, that having younger siblings makes the home environment less encouraging because they frequently encourage them to play, which makes it harder to concentrate on reading.

Pupils reading habits and literacy development are greatly influenced by the reading environment and routines in the home. A pupils language and literacy skills are greatly improved by a pleasant and encouraging home reading environment, which is defined by consistent reading routines and the availability of books (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Active reading activities by parents, such reading aloud to their children or having conversations with them about stories, help them develop the fundamentals of reading and cultivate a lifetime love of reading. Additionally, consistency is provided by a planned routine, which is critical for improving reading comprehension and fluency (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). However, the efficiency of reading routines can be adversely affected by disturbances or distractions in the home environment, such as competing hobbies or noise. For instance, childrens who grow up in chaotic or unsupportive homes may find it difficult to focus, which could hinder their reading development. Ultimately, a key element in developing children's literacy and cultivating favorable attitudes toward reading is creating a calm and stimulating home reading environment together with regular routines.

4.2.2. Barriers and Challenges in Reading

The majority of the difficulties with children's reading skills are related to spelling and letter recognition. Respondents state that their childrens frequently have trouble reading steadily, correctly spelling words (Respondents 2, 3, and 4), and recognizing letters (Respondents 1 and 5). Parents recognize the challenges their childrens face and offer extra support, like teaching letters gradually, providing letter recognition books, and offering spelling aid. Despite these initiatives, many students continue to face obstacles such as poor growth and a lack of fluency.

Reading obstacles and difficulties are complex and frequently impacted by motivational, contextual, and cognitive variables. Lyon (2003) is mentioned that poor vocabulary knowledge, restricted phonemic awareness, and trouble decoding words are often the causes

of reading difficulties. According to Ehri (2005), children who have trouble identifying letters and their associated sounds frequently encounter major obstacles in their development of reading fluency. These difficulties are made worse by environmental variables, such as a lack of literature access, inaccurate reading, and unsupportive home environment (Salminen et al, 2021; Mule, 2014; Torgensen, 2002).

Furthermore, reading progress might be hampered by distractions, such as loud noises or conflicting activities (McGinnis, 2012; Evans & Shively, 2010). Another important factor is motivational hurdles, including a lack of enthusiasm in reading or unpleasant prior experiences. According to Wigfield & Guthrie (1997), pupils who are not intrinsically motivated to read are less likely to interact with texts and acquire the literacy skills they need. A comprehensive strategy is needed to overcome these obstacles, one that include focused instruction, the establishment of a nurturing reading environment, and the use of interesting, developmentally appropriate resources to maintain interest and promote literacy development.

4.2.3. *Factors Influencing Children's Reading Interest*

According to the study, external distractions are the most significant factor influencing children's interest in reading. Several responders (responders 1, 2, and 4) state that childrens would rather play with friends than do reading exercises. Respondent 3 also emphasizes how children's reading progress is slowed by their rapid boredom. According to Respondent 5, children's decreased interest in reading is also a result of laziness and a loss of routine. A complex interaction between social, environmental, and personal factors shapes children's interest in reading. A child's enjoy of stories and curiosity about new information are examples of intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for developing a long-lasting interest in reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). However, a child's interest in books is greatly influenced by contextual factors, such as the availability of reading materials and a nurturing home environment.

According to Neuman & Celano (2001), kids who have more access to books at home or at libraries are more likely to grow up to love reading. Reading interest is also influenced by social factors, such as peer relationships and parental participation. Children are more likely to see reading as a desirable activity when parents participate in shared reading activities or set an example of positive reading behaviors (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). On the other hand, environmental distractions like excessive screen time or a predilection for non-academic pursuits might make reading less engaging (Evans et al., 2010). Children can be encouraged to read by educators and other caregivers who provide engaging, age-appropriate reading materials that align with their interests (Hsieh, 2024; Guthrie et al., 2004). When taken as a whole, these elements emphasize how crucial it is to establish a nurturing and engaging atmosphere in order to foster kids' interest and involvement in reading activities.

4.2.4. *Steps Taken to Address Reading Difficulties*

Parents have taken proactive measures to address these issues, including encouraging children to read school books consistently (Respondent 2), limiting playtime (Respondent 1), and offering extra help through spelling and guided reading activities (Respondents 3, 4, and 5). Although some parents use reprimands, others stress the value of structured learning practices and positive reinforcement. Respondent 4 encourages their child to reduce distractions, repeat school subject, and emphasize the advantages of academic accomplishment.

A comprehensive strategy that incorporates focused interventions, encouraging surroundings, and regular practice is needed to address reading challenges. It is well known that teaching phonics and phonemic awareness are crucial methods for enhancing reading abilities in kids who struggle. Ehri et al. (2001) stress that systematic phonics training improves children's word decoding skills, which helps them develop their comprehension and fluency. Another important role is played by parents and teachers, who offer tailored assistance, like one-on-one tutoring or guided reading sessions, to target certain areas of difficulty. Additionally, creating a conducive learning environment at home and use level-appropriate reading materials can enhance motivation to read.

5. CONCLUSION

The study highlights how important organized interventions, parental participation, and the home environment are in supporting kids' reading development. Reading skills are greatly improved in a supportive home reading environment that is marked by regular routines and parental participation. But development is frequently hampered by external distractions and motivational issues, underscoring the necessity of a well-rounded and engaging learning environment. The reading difficulties that found in the third grade elementary schools include trouble with letter recognition, spelling, and fluency are exacerbated by environmental and cognitive factors, necessitating the use of focused methods. To overcome the reading difficulties, parents use techniques like spelling drills, guided reading, and distraction reduction to help their children who struggle with reading. Additionally, the adjustment on pupils' home environment is the important factors. The parent should provide the support and facilities to enhance their children reading abilities.

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