

INDONESIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' INTEREST IN READING BOOKS

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Abstract: This research aimed to investigate Indonesian junior high school students' interest in reading books in the digital era, the factors that influence their interest, and the teacher's efforts to increase their interest in reading books in the digital era. The participants of this study were the students and the English teacher of VIII A and VIII B classes of MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Kalijambe Sragen in the academic year 2021/2022. The researcher used a mixed-method research design using quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. The data were collected through interviews and observations. The results revealed that the students' interest in reading books in the digital era was 31%. Several factors influenced the students' interest in reading books, both internal and external. The students' willingness and laziness/boredom were revealed as the internal factors, while the external factors were gadgets, the types of text or reading materials, and free time. The teacher's efforts to increase the students' interest in reading were by providing interesting books, having reading activities together, creating a comfortable place and atmosphere, and analyzing texts together. This study implies the prominent role of a teacher in increasing students' interest in reading books.

Keywords: reading, interest, books, digital era

INTRODUCTION

Learning has a very close relationship with reading books since one of the most important activities in the learning process is reading books. By reading a book, a person will gain knowledge, information, and experience. Reading has become an important bridge for students who want to integrate interactive ability (Springer et al., 2017). Reading a book is an activity that includes the process of understanding, analyzing, and developing knowledge. People who are fond of reading will get new insight and develop their intelligence so that they will be able to deal with future challenges (Putro & Lee, 2017). Thus, reading has an important role in human life.

Reading activities can be carried out if there is a strong interest or desire from the students themselves. Interest is a liking, a pleasure, or a hobby of doing something. The role of interest is essential in addition to the student's ability to read the books. Interest has a strong driving force in the realization of an activity. Interest in reading can be interpreted as a tendency and desire to read a particular reading source (Springer et al., 2017). Students' interest in reading books arises from their curiosity to understand or obtain information. If students are more interested in reading books, they will also get more knowledge. This activity will affect their achievement.

Reading a book is an activity that has many benefits. By reading books, students can broaden their horizons and views, add and form a good attitude, get entertainment, make good use of time, and increase their knowledge. Moreover, learning materials at Indonesian

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education levels are inseparable from the role of sourcebooks, student books, and teacher books. Books have a very important role as supporting materials from kindergarten, elementary, high school, and even university levels.

The digital era has brought various good changes and a positive impact. The technological environment can produce significant improvements in students, academically and socially, if applied wisely (Riley et al., 1996). Everyone can get information quickly, and communication has become easy in this digital era. It also brings changes from human or manual labor to machine power (digital systems). Further, this era also eventually changed the reading habit (Kurniasih, 2017). As a result, this system has changed many things and threatens the printed media as an inseparable element of reading activity. For example, printed books can replace digital ones (e-books). The digital era also brings many negative impacts, becoming a challenge in human life. Students in the digital era tend to less enjoy reading books (Mulia, 2019). They rarely read books of poetry, drama, prose, short stories, or novels. Students are less interested in reading digital books although it is handy. The development of technology presents various kinds of applications or features that are more attractive than reading books.

Previous researchers have conducted research related to this study. Maulidia (2018) conducted a study entitled "Case Study of Children's Interest in Reading Books in Taman Baca Kampung Pemulung Kalisari Damen Surabaya." This study investigated children's reading interests, influencing factors, and efforts to increase reading interest. The result of the study showed that the children's interest in reading was quite good. Factors that encouraged their interest in reading came from family factors, education level, children's habits, talents, gender, and reward. The efforts to improve the children's interest in reading were by improving the infrastructure quality, having competition, and enriching book collections. Further, Pitoyo (2020) in his study discovered that Indonesian children's reading interest is still low amidst the massive development of information technology. This result was based on meta-analysis data during 2018-2020. It was influenced by three major factors: literacy, technology, and library infrastructure.

Teachers and educational institutions have made several efforts to foster students' reading interests in the classroom and beyond. It can be seen from a study by Juliansyah & Rukmana (2022), which reported the establishment of a reading corner program as one of the efforts to increase students' reading interest. It revealed that the reading corner didn't improve students' reading interest but needed teachers' support by giving tasks or projects related to reading activities. Another effort was made in a classroom setting, as reported by Parmawati & Yugafiati (2017). They conducted classroom action research to improve students' reading interest by using authentic materials. It was reported that authentic materials could improve students' reading interest and classroom situation.

In this current research, the researcher chose eighth-grade students as the participants because they were the middle level in junior high school. Students at this level commonly have started to use their cell phones and are closely engaged with those devices. In addition, eighth-grade students still have plenty of time because they have not yet faced school exams. The research participants were the eighth-grade students of MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Kalijambe Sragen. The researcher also interviewed the teacher to elicit data regarding the research questions. Since the pandemic era, this school has allowed students to bring cell phones into class. This school also allowed the researcher to analyze students' interest in reading books

This research aimed to investigate students' interest in reading books (both printed and online) that included textbooks, and other types of books, such as poetry books, comics, novels, and others. Further, it also explored the factors that contributed to the students' reading interest and the efforts to improve their interest in reading books.

RESEARCH METHOD

A mixed method was employed in this research, using quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. The quantitative approach was used to know the percentage of students interested in reading books and their preference for using gadgets as familiar tools in the digital era. To count the percentage, the researcher used the following formula (Sudijono, 2008):

$$P = \frac{F \times 100\%}{N}$$

Explanation:

P = Percentage

F = Total Number of Students' interest in reading

N = Total Number of all students in VIII A and VIII B class

FINDINGS

1. The Students' Interest in Reading Books

The students' interest in reading books was reflected in the results of the interview and observation, and here, it is presented quantitatively. As many as 25 students confirmed that they liked reading books (both printed and digital books), while 55 students did not like reading books.

Table 1. The Students' Interest in Reading Books

Students' interest	Students' number	Total
The students like reading books (both printed books or e-books/online).	50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74.	Twenty-five (25) students
The students do not like reading a book (both printed books or e-books/online)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80.	Fifty-five (55) students

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the students who do not have an interest in reading books (both printed and online) are more dominant than those who are interested in reading books. Only twenty-five students enjoy reading books. It represents 31% of all participants. Meanwhile, 69% of the participants, as many as fifty-five students, don't like reading printed and online books (e-books).

From the observations in the class, which were conducted over two days on 06 and 07 January 2022, it can be seen that the students' interest in reading is still low. When the learning activities took place, the students did not read books if they were not taught or ordered by the teacher. During the learning activity in class VIII A, the teacher asked questions about the study material. The teacher asked the students:

Teacher: "What do you know about present continuous tense?" (But all students could not answer the question).

Teacher: "Have you read the material about present continuous tense?"

Student: "Not yet, ma'am".

Teacher: "Now read the text material about present continuous tense. I'll give you ten minutes to read the material".

Student: "Okay, ma'am".

Based on this observation, it can be said that the students did not realize the importance of reading books for their learning process. It resulted in their unreadiness in joining the class.

2. Factors That Influence the Students' Interest in Reading Books

The interview and observation also reflected the factors influencing the students' interest in reading books. The results of the interviews were presented quantitatively to present the percentage. The factors were categorized into several themes, as seen in the following table.

Table 2. The Factors That Influence the Students' Reading Interest

Influencing factors	Students' numbers	Total
1) Willingness It was derived from the factor of interest or desire from oneself and their intention to read to get information.	11, 27, 41, 52, 53, 67, 68, 72, 74.	Nine (9) students.
2) Laziness/boredom The students just thought they were lazy and did not want to read. They also felt bored when they were reading.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 71, 73, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80.	Sixty-one (61) students.
3) Gadget The students preferred doing other activities using their gadgets but not reading.	54, 62, 77.	Three (3) students.
4) Types of reading material The students confirmed that the types or content of the books also influenced their interest.	50, 59, 60, 69, 70.	Five (5) students.
5) Free time Their free time also contributed to their reading interest.	22, 23.	Two (2) students.

The factors that influenced their reading interest could be identified from the interview with the students of VIII A and VIII B classes. Based on the interview with these students, it can be concluded that the factors can be classified into internal and external factors. Internal factors from the students themselves included willingness (for students who have an interest in reading) and a sense of laziness and boredom (for students who do not have an interest in reading). Meanwhile, the external factors came from gadgets, types of reading text or reading material, and free time. From the interview results, most students do not like reading because of their sense of laziness.

Regarding the digital era in which the students were closely engaged with the gadget, their interest in using the gadget for reading was investigated. From the interview, there were several themes gained dealing with the students' activity using their gadgets, and only a few used them for reading.

Table 3. Activities That the Students Often Do When Using Their Cell Phones

Result	Students' numbers	Total
1) Academic activities The students often used their cell phones for reading books, news, or other types of reading content.	27, 39, 50, 68.	Four (4) students.
2) Entertainment The students often used their cell phones for entertainment, such as accessing social media, watching videos, and playing games.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80.	Seventy-six (61) students.

The interviews were about the students' activities, whether they often used their cell phones for academic activities (reading books/news) or entertainment (games/social media). It can be seen that there were only four (4) students who often used their cell phones for academic activities. In contrast, others often used cell phones for entertainment, such as playing games and social media. The table revealed that the students' interest in reading using gadgets was very low. It only represented 5% of all the participants, while 95% used their gadgets for entertainment.

3. The Teacher's Efforts to Increase the Students' Interest in Reading Books

To increase the students' interest in reading books, the teacher conducted several efforts, as derived from the following interview. The interview with the English teacher was conducted on 20 December 2021. The following is the interview with the English teacher.

Researcher : *Assalamu'alaikum wr. wb.*
 English Teacher : *"Wa'alaikum salam wr. wb."*

- Researcher : First, let me introduce myself. My name is Yeni Fitriyani. I'm a college student from UIN Raden Mas Said and an alumnus of this school.
- English Teacher : "Okay. Is there anything I can help with?"
- Researcher : I want to interview you, Mrs. This interview is about the efforts made to increase students' interest in reading.
- English Teacher : "Fine, I'll answer."
- Researcher : Thank you, Mrs. According to you, is there any effort teachers can make to increase students' interest in reading?
- English Teacher : "In my opinion, there are several efforts that can be made and are effective to be implemented in increasing reading interest."
- Researcher : What are the teacher's efforts that can be made to increase the students' interest in reading books in the digital era, Mrs.?
- English Teacher : "The first way to increase reading interest, in my opinion, is by providing interesting texts so that students become interested in reading. The second way is to hold reading activities together, which can also increase reading interest because I ask all students to read the same text together in this activity. This activity can indirectly foster their interest in reading. The third way is by providing a comfortable place and atmosphere. If it is comfortable, students can read happily and calmly. In addition, students who read books also become more focused. Moreover, the activity of studying the text is also able to increase reading interest because in studying the text, students must read the whole text".
- Researcher : All right, Mrs., thank you for the opportunity given to me in this interview activity.
- English Teacher : "You're welcome."

For further investigation, the researcher also made observations in the library. As has been observed, the library at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Kalijambe Sragen had a space that was not too wide. However, it could be considered comfortable and clean. The library was equipped with various books such as several learning books (academic books), dictionaries, general knowledge books, the Qur'an, some religion books (hadists), story books, and novels. The facilities in the library of MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Kalijambe Sragen were pretty good, including tables, chairs, shelves, a computer, and a fan.

DISCUSSIONS

1. Students' Interest in Reading

The researcher obtained data about the students' interest in reading books in the digital era after conducting observations and interviews with VIII A and VIII B students at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Kalijambe Sragen. The study results show that the students' interest in reading books is 31%. The percentage of the students' interest in reading books in the digital era at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Kalijambe Sragen is relatively low. It is also confirmed from the interviews that in the digital era, using gadgets, the students are not well-engaged in reading activities, and they prefer using the gadgets for entertainment,

such as accessing social media, watching videos, and playing games. The observations also reflect that the students don't read the learning materials in their books, which influences their readiness to join the class.

These results are in accordance with the previous studies, which reported that Indonesian students have lower reading interest (Juliansyah & Rukmana, 2022; Mulia, 2019; Pitoyo, 2020). Compared to this current one, those studies imply that the lower reading interest of Indonesian students is experienced in all education levels, from elementary school to higher education level. Meanwhile, a study in an informal library in a community shows better reading interest (Maulidia, 2018). Therefore, the context of the reading environment can contribute to reading interest. On the other hand, technology exposure cannot be denied as the influencing factor that distracts students' interest in reading. It was also influenced by several factors discussed in the following section.

2. Factors that Influence Reading Interest

In this research, the researcher finds some factors that influence the students' interest in reading books (both printed and electronic versions). The results of the interviews indicate that the factors are divided into two types, namely internal and external factors.

The internal factors are willingness and a sense of laziness and boredom. Willingness can be interpreted as motivation that comes from the self. A person can feel happy doing an activity based on a will. However, several factors can hinder a student's interest in reading. This can be solved if a student has his own will (interest) to always read and improve his knowledge. The interview shows that willingness affects the students' interest in reading among the students in classes VIII A and VIII B, as shown in Table 2. In the results of the interviews with the students, the factor of willingness can be explained in two aspects: the factors of their intention to read and the factor of interest or desire from oneself.

Based on the interviews, laziness is the biggest factor that affects the students' interest in reading books among the students in classes VIII A and VIII B, as shown in Table 2 and supported by the results of the interviews. In addition, some students also say that they do not like reading books because they feel bored. The students feel bored reading due to lots of texts and uninteresting reading materials. Based on the results of the interviews, laziness and boredom are the factors that affect the students' reading interest in classes VIII A and VIII B. These internal influencing factors can be derived from the lack of reading literacy (Pitoyo, 2020). The students might not be aware of the importance of reading from their benefits, and no trigger around them motivates them to read.

On the other hand, several external factors are identified as the factors which influence the students' interest in reading books. The first one is the gadget, usually a cell phone which the students own. The researcher conducted interviews about the activities they did by using cell phones. The students often use their cell phones for entertainment, such as playing games and opening social media (Whats App, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook). The students feel that using their cell phones for entertainment is more fun than academic activities (reading books/news) because it is more interesting. From the interviews, gadgets or cell phones are a factor that can affect the students' reading interests. Only four students often use their cell phones for academic activities, while the others often use cell phones for entertainment activities.

The next external factor is the types of reading texts and free time. Based on the results of the interviews, the students do not like the content of the text that is too long. The students are interested in reading activities if the text given is interesting. From the interviews, the text is a factor that can affect the students' reading interests. They are more

interested in interesting text with fewer words. Moreover, free time is another factor that influences their reading interest. They tend to read if they have free time, but somehow, many prefer playing with their gadgets.

Those external factors are widely discussed in the previous studies, and the findings in this current study correspond to the prior results. Gadget appears to be a big influence (Mulia, 2019). It is because gadgets or smartphones owned by the students provide various entertaining activities for them, so they prefer doing those activities, such as accessing social media, watching videos, or playing games instead of reading. Furthermore, interesting texts or books are also important in determining students' interests (Maulidia, 2018). Children tend to be motivated to read when they find the types of books they like.

3. Teacher's Efforts to Increase the Students' Interest in Reading Books

The teacher is a role model for the students and has a good influence on her students. The teacher can also direct the students to do something. Based on the interview, there are several efforts to help the students increase their reading interests, such as by providing interesting textbooks, having reading activities together, preparing a comfortable place and atmosphere, and studying texts together. These efforts can be classified into classroom activities and outside-the-classroom activities. Providing interesting textbooks or learning materials is very important to promote students' reading motivation, as has been reported in previous studies (Maulidia, 2018; Parmawati & Yugafiati, 2017). The classroom activity can be conducted by having a reading session and bringing certain texts or materials into the lesson; therefore, the students must read.

On the other hand, efforts to increase the students' interest can be made beyond the classroom activity by improving the library facilities and other infrastructure to encourage the students' reading interest (Juliansyah & Rukmana, 2022; Pitoyo, 2020). However, those beyond-the-classroom activities will be optimal if well-engaged with in-classroom ones. Therefore, the teachers and the school must actively take place and arrange learning activities that can connect both in class and beyond

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussion, several conclusions are drawn. The percentage of the students' interest in reading books in the digital era at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Kalijambe Sragen in the academic year of 2021/2022 is low, as much as 31%. This is evidenced by the results of data analysis from interviews with the students. Two influencing factors that contribute to the students' interest in reading books in the digital era are internal and external. The internal factors are the students' willingness to read and the sense of laziness/boredom. Meanwhile, the external factors are the gadget, the types of text or reading material, and free time. The teacher has made several efforts to increase the students' interest in reading books by providing interesting texts, having reading activities together, creating a comfortable place and atmosphere, and studying the text together.

Several suggestions can be derived from this study. For teachers, it points out the essential role of teachers to increase students' interest in reading books. They can make several efforts such as giving interesting texts so that the students do not get bored while reading, providing motivation and guidance to the students to carry out reading activities, giving insight to the students about the importance of reading books, and conducting activities that can help the students to increase their reading interest. Meanwhile, schools can encourage the students' reading interest by having activities or competitions related to books/reading activities and providing a "reading corner" in every class to support students' reading activities so that the students can read books in the classroom.

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