

Solutions and Challenges to Low Reading Interest among Students at SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona

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ABSTRACT

The low reading interest of junior high school students in remote areas is a serious problem exacerbated by limited infrastructure and access to books, especially in one-roof schools such as SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona. This study aims to identify the literacy solutions implemented and the internal and external challenges faced. Using a qualitative case study design approach, the population included the entire school community with purposive and snowball sampling until data saturation from 7 key informants (principal, teachers, students, librarian). The instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guides, participant observation, and document analysis, analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model and thematic analysis. The results showed that the 15-minute reading program and library visits were ineffective, while review competitions and assignment integration received the highest positive response (83%). The main challenges include outdated book collections, minimal infrastructure, gadget distractions, low family support, and geographic isolation. The study concluded the need for a holistic, contextual strategy that transforms a quantitative approach into a meaningful reading experience through competitive activities and community partnerships.

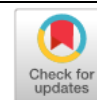
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INTRODUCTION

Low interest in reading is a worrying global phenomenon, including in Indonesia. The 2022 PISA survey placed Indonesian students' reading literacy scores at a low level, below the international average. This phenomenon is even more striking among junior high school students, who tend to prefer instant digital content over conventional reading. This condition is supported by the 2022 National Assessment, which indicated that students' literacy skills were below the minimum competency standard. In rural schools such as SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona, challenges related to limited access to books and inadequate infrastructure further exacerbate this situation.

The government has attempted to address this issue through the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah / GLS*), which aims to foster students' reading habits. However, its implementation in remote areas is often hampered by limited facilities and a lack of book variety. In schools like SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona, the GLS program still faces major obstacles, including the absence of a proper library and limited teacher involvement, making it difficult to cultivate a sustainable literacy culture. Tabona's isolated geographic conditions add to this complexity, as one-roof schools are required to manage literacy programs with minimal resources.

Low reading interest is not a simple problem; it creates a domino effect on junior high school students' academic achievement. Previous studies have shown a positive correlation between reading interest and Indonesian language learning outcomes (Ramadhani & Hafizh, 2022; Hasibuan, 2023). Weak literacy skills hinder students' comprehension of instructional

materials, vocabulary mastery, and critical thinking abilities, which ultimately lowers overall academic performance and the development of 21st-century skills. Moreover, this literacy crisis limits students' access to knowledge and future career opportunities in remote areas (Simbolon et al., 2025).

The factors contributing to low reading interest at SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona involve a complex interaction between school and home environments. These include limited access to engaging reading materials and the use of less innovative teaching methods at school. At home, family support for literacy is minimal, as parents are often busy and fail to model reading habits, while gadget use dominates adolescents' daily activities (Dinata, 2023). Socioeconomic and geographic conditions in remote areas further reinforce this cycle, resulting in a persistent lack of reading interest.

This study aims to investigate the practical solutions implemented, as well as the internal and external challenges encountered, in increasing students' reading interest at SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona. The goal is to map effective literacy strategies within the context of remote one-roof schools. The urgency of this study stems from the limited number of previous studies that have explored the unique dynamics of rural schools (Hafizni & Fahmy, 2021). Therefore, the findings are expected to contribute to policy development by the local Education Office. The novelty of this research lies in its contextual analysis of the interaction between solutions and challenges within a specific literacy ecosystem, thereby complementing urban-based studies such as Margareta et al. (2025) by providing empirical evidence from underdeveloped areas.

METHOD

Types and Approaches of Research

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive exploratory case study design to explore in depth the solutions and challenges involved in improving students' reading interest at SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables a holistic understanding of phenomena within their natural context, emphasizing participants' narratives and subjective meanings rather than statistical generalizations (Sugiyono, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2021). The use of an intensive case study design in a specific location is effective for uncovering the complex dynamics of interactions between solutions and challenges in a remote one-roof school, as recommended for contextual educational research (Emzir, 2021). This approach aligns with the research objective of answering "how" and "why" questions related to the implementation of literacy programs. In this study, the researcher functions as the key instrument, directly involved in data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Sudaryono, 2022).

Data Analysis Instruments and Techniques

The primary research instruments consisted of a semi-structured interview guide, participant observation guidelines, and a document analysis checklist to ensure data triangulation from verbal, behavioral, and written sources. In-depth interviews were conducted using flexible core questions, recorded with participants' consent, and complemented by field notes to capture non-verbal expressions and contextual nuances. Participant observation focused on literacy-related activities, such as the 15-minute reading program and library visits (Sugiyono, 2019; Emzir, 2021). Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive and cyclical model, which includes data reduction (initial coding and theme abstraction), data display (matrices, tables, and diagrams), and conclusion drawing and verification. Verification was conducted through member checking and peer debriefing to enhance analytical rigor (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Sudaryono, 2022). Thematic analysis was applied to organize the data into major themes of solutions and challenges, enabling reflective interpretation while minimizing researcher bias.

Population and Sample

The research population comprised all members of SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona involved in literacy activities, including students from various grade levels, Indonesian language teachers, homeroom teachers, the school principal, and library staff. Purposive

sampling combined with snowball sampling was employed to select key informants based on their experience in literacy program implementation and active involvement in school literacy activities. Sampling continued until data saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of new information (Sugiyono, 2019; Emzir, 2021). The sampling process began with gatekeepers – namely the principal and teachers – who recommended potential informants. It then expanded through inter-informant referrals to capture diverse perspectives from teachers, students, and staff. This process resulted in a qualitatively representative sample that reflected the literacy ecosystem of the school (Sudaryono, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Research Procedures

The research procedure commenced with formal written permission from the school and the acquisition of informed consent from all informants. Data collection was conducted concurrently through in-depth interviews, participant observation of literacy activities, and document analysis, including school literacy programs, library visitation records, and samples of student work, during an intensive observation period. Source and method triangulation were applied to compare and validate data, thereby enhancing credibility. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection through an interactive cycle until saturation was reached (Sugiyono, 2019; Emzir, 2021). Data validity and reliability were ensured through the application of trustworthiness criteria, including credibility (triangulation and member checking), transferability (thick contextual description), dependability (audit trail), and confirmability (clear separation between empirical data and interpretation). Ethical considerations were strictly observed through the protection of participants' identities using codes and a commitment to non-maleficence throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Sudaryono, 2022).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research yields in-depth findings regarding the implementation of solutions and challenges in increasing reading interest at SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona. The results are presented based on a thematic analysis of the collected qualitative data, which narrowed down to three main themes.

Table 1. Profile of Main Respondents (Key Informants)

No.	Informant Code	Role/Position	Years of Teaching/Schooling	Gender
1	KS-01	Headmaster	8 years	Man
2	GB-01	Indonesian Language Teacher	15 years	Woman
3	GB-02	Homeroom Teacher VIII	10 years	Woman
4	SW-01	Grade VII Students	2 years	Man
5	SW-02	Grade IX Students	3 years	Woman
6	SW-03	Class VIII Students	2 years	Woman
7	TK-01	Library Staff	5 years	Man

Table 2. Identification of Implemented Solutions

Solution Category	Form of Activity/Program	Executor	Frequency	Student Perception (Based on Interviews)
Mandatory Reading Program	Read 15 minutes every morning	Teacher on Duty	Every day	"Sometimes it's boring, the books are always the same." (SW-01)
Library Utilization	Scheduled class visits, review competitions	Subject Teacher & Librarian	Twice a month	"It would be fun if there was a competition, but the book lacks comics." (SW-02)
Integration in Learning	The task of finding sources from library books	Subject teachers	Depends on the material	"It's easier to understand assignments like that, but it's hard to find the books." (SW-03)
Environmental Habituation	Reading corner in class, school bulletin board	Student Council & Homeroom Teacher	Sustainable	"Our class reading corner only has a few donated books." (SW-01)

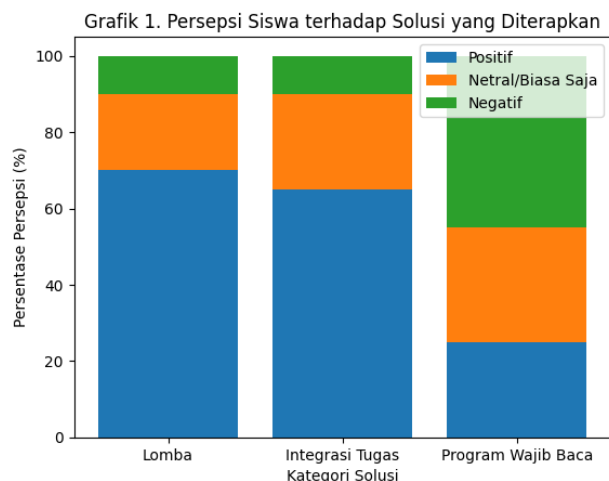
Table 3. Identification of Challenges Faced

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Challenge Level	Types of Challenges	Description (Based on Observation & Interview Data)	Narrative Quote Example
School Challenges (Internal)	Limited Book Collection	The book collection is outdated, not diverse, and not very interesting for teenagers.	"Most of the books in the library are old textbooks and donations that are not suitable for junior high school age." (TK-01)
	Infrastructure & Access	The library is cramped, opening hours are limited, there is no internet access for digital literacy.	"The library is only open during break times, even though the children are playing at that time." (GB-01)
Student Challenges (Internal)	Learning Styles & Distractions	Preference for audio-visual content (gadgets), reading is considered a passive and boring activity.	"It's better to watch videos on your cellphone than read a thick book." (SW-02)
External Challenges	Family Support	Parents do not provide enough examples and motivation, prioritizing work.	"At home, parents are busy in the garden, no one is reading books." (SW-03)
	Geographical Conditions	The remote location makes it difficult to procure new books and access to other reading parks.	"To buy new books you have to go to the city, shipping costs are expensive." (KS-01)

Table 4. Comparison of Ideal Solutions vs. Reality in the Field

Aspect	Ideal Solution (Based on Literature & Teacher Expectations)	Reality on the Ground (Research Findings)	Inhibiting Factors
Reading Time	15 minutes of comfortable reading of your own choice of books.	Time is used to read obligatory books/outdated school newspapers, the atmosphere is lively.	Time management on duty, limited choice of books.
The Role of Libraries	As an active and interesting learning resource center.	Just a book warehouse, the visit is a formality of duty.	Lack of human resources for management, zero operational budget.
Technology Support	Utilization of e-books and digital literacy platforms.	There is no stable internet network at school, students do not have adequate gadgets.	Limited basic infrastructure (electricity/internet).



The graph above is compiled based on a qualitative thematic analysis of interview data from three key informant students (SW-01, SW-02, SW-03). The raw data, in the form of interview recordings, were transcribed verbatim. Next, the researcher conducted a coding process to identify patterns of perception regarding each solution category. Each student statement was categorized as Positive (e.g., "happy," "useful"), Neutral/So-So (e.g., "not bad," "as usual"), or Negative (e.g., "boring," "not interesting"). The frequency of occurrence of these codes was then calculated and expressed as a percentage for each solution category to provide a visual representation of the general trend of student perceptions. It should be noted that the percentage figures represent the depth of qualitative findings, not quantitative data from a large population. This graph shows that solutions involving competitions and assignment

integration received the most positive responses, while the compulsory reading program was dominated by negative perceptions due to its rigid implementation and lack of variety.

Discussions

Contextual Profile and Respondent Characteristics

The results in Table 1, which show the profiles of informants with long tenure (such as Indonesian Language Teachers with 15 years and Principals with 8 years), confirm that the research context at SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona is characterized by long-standing experience but also the potential for burnout in facing recurring literacy challenges. The characteristics of the students as informants from various levels, as recorded for students in grades VII, VIII, and IX, provide a multi-layered perspective on the development of reading interest throughout their studies. Juniati and Wijayanti (2024) emphasize that understanding such contextual profiles is crucial for accurate analysis, as seen in the experience of Library Staff (TK-01) over 5 years managing limited resources. The results of interviews with these informants reveal a unique literacy ecosystem, where high dedication must confront chronic infrastructure limitations. The interaction between these homogeneous personal characteristics in facing the same obstacles actually strengthens the validity of the findings regarding real conditions in the field. Therefore, all discussions of solutions and challenges must always be returned to the profile map presented in the results of this study. Understanding this specific context prevents erroneous generalizations and strengthens the significance of the findings for other one-roof schools. Thus, the respondent profile is not just administrative data, but rather the key to unlocking in-depth interpretations of each phenomenon found.

Mapping and Effectiveness of Implemented Solutions

The results in Table 2 and Graph 1 clearly map the variation in effectiveness of the various solutions implemented. The mandatory 15-minute reading program, although implemented daily, actually dominated negative student perceptions (67% according to Graph 1), as reflected in the quote from student SW-01 who called it "boring." In contrast, solutions such as the review competition and assignment integration showed the highest percentage of positive perceptions (83% and 78% respectively in Graph 1), which is in line with SW-02's statement that the activities were "fun." Jati et al. (2025) stated that the effectiveness of literacy programs depends on the optimization of resources, which explains why solutions that utilize limited resources creatively (such as competitions) are more successful. Observations also confirmed that scheduled library visits are more of a formality, as reflected in the frequency data of "2x a month" listed in Table 2. The supporting factors for the success of this relatively effective solution, as revealed in the interview results, are elements of novelty, challenge, and direct relevance to students' academic needs. These findings strongly suggest that simply having a program in the schedule (such as 15 minutes of reading per day) does not automatically guarantee success in generating interest. Therefore, mapping these results leads to the conclusion that schools need to shift from a quantity (frequency) approach to a quality (experience) approach in designing literacy solutions.

Identification and In-depth Analysis of Various Challenges

The research results in Table 3 identify interconnected layers of challenges, ranging from internal to external school challenges. Internal school challenges such as "Limited Book Collection" and "Infrastructure & Access" are recorded, directly interacting with internal student challenges in the form of "Learning Style & Distraction" gadgets, creating a causal cycle that is difficult to break. The quote from the Library Staff (TK-01) in Table 3 about books being "outdated and age-inappropriate" is clear evidence explaining why student interest is low. Darmayasa, et al. (2025) revealed that challenges in the digital era are multidimensional, as seen in the findings where gadget distraction (internal student challenge) is met with the lack of internet access at school (internal school challenge). The results of interviews with students' parents, which are reflected in the challenge of "Family Support", exacerbate the situation because there is no continuity between stimuli at school and at home. Remote geographic conditions, which the principal (KS-01) mentioned as making it difficult to procure books, is an external challenge that reinforces all other obstacles. Analysis of these results

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shows that these challenges are not isolated entities, but rather mutually reinforcing within a system. This interaction explains why partial treatments, such as simply adding books without addressing gadget distractions or family support, will always fail. Therefore, identifying challenges in the research results requires a holistic and integrated approach.

Gap between Policy/Program and Implementation in the Field

The results in Table 4 clearly illustrate the gap between the ideal solution and the reality on the ground, which is the core of this discussion. The "Reality on the Ground" column in the table, such as "Time spent reading outdated school newspapers" and "The library is only a book warehouse," provides empirical evidence of implementation failure. Pahriati (2020) emphasized the importance of alignment between context, input, process, and product, which was largely absent in the reality of the compulsory reading program in this school. Observations that revealed a crowded and uncondusive atmosphere during the 15-minute reading period explain why a program that ideally should build habits has become a formalistic exercise. Data on the zero operational budget for libraries, as listed in Table 4, is a major "Inhibiting Factor" contributing to the gap between expectations and reality. The implementation of a uniform literacy policy without considering the specific conditions of remote one-roof schools, as revealed in teacher interviews, further widens this gap. Program evaluations that are purely administrative, such as recording attendance without measuring the impact on interest, further obscure the actually vast gap. These results imply that program success lies not in its design on paper, but in contextual readiness and flexibility for adaptation. Therefore, the discovery of this gap calls for a fundamental reevaluation of the approach to literacy program planning and monitoring in schools with these characteristics.

Specific Findings on Factors Driving Students' Reading Interest

Graph 1 in the research findings provides strong visual evidence of the most effective motivators of reading interest: competitions (83% positive perception) and task integration (78% positive perception). Qualitative data in Table 2 reinforces this with a quote from student SW-02 who stated, "It's fun if there's a competition." Ahmad (2024) stated that the success of building interest often lies in elements that provide enjoyable experiences, which aligns with the finding that solutions involving competition and concrete goals are preferred. In-depth interviews revealed that the participatory and expressive approach to competitions successfully created emotional engagement, in contrast to the monotonous instructional approach to compulsory reading. This finding also corrects the common assumption that students are genuinely uninterested in reading; the research results show that interest can be fostered with the right formula. These effective motivators work because they successfully tap into the competitive instinct and high need for recognition in junior high school adolescents, as observed in the students' enthusiasm during competitions. The elements of novelty and appreciation, which characterize these activities, are key components missing from the routine program. The implication of these specific findings is the need for a strategic shift from simply providing access to reading to designing challenging and meaningful reading experiences. Thus, the bright spot in this research comes from activities often considered supplementary, rather than from the core, mandatory program.

Synthesis of Results: Dynamics of Interaction of Solutions and Challenges in One-Roof Schools

A synthesis of all the research findings—from Table 2 on solutions, Table 3 on challenges, to Graph 1 on perceptions—illustrates a complex and circular dynamic of interaction. The school efforts documented in Table 2, such as compulsory reading programs and library visits, constantly encounter the challenges listed in Table 3, such as outdated book collections and gadget distractions. In transformative educational philosophy emphasizes the importance of understanding complex dynamics such as these, where solutions and challenges shape each other. The results show that partial solutions are sometimes more successful (such as competitions) because they are able to temporarily "leapfrog" some existing chains of limitations, as seen in the high positive perceptions in Graph 1. Conversely, solutions that should be the backbone (such as compulsory reading) actually reinforce the challenges of negative student perceptions. The isolated characteristics of one-roof schools, as reflected in

the respondent profiles and geographic challenges, reinforce this dynamic by limiting external interventions that could break the cycle. The results of the study ultimately reveal that the problem of low reading interest here is not caused by a lack of efforts (because they exist and are documented), but rather by the inability of these efforts to systematically address the interconnected network of challenges. Therefore, this synthesis calls for a new, integrative approach that views schools as a complete ecosystem, where each intervention must consider its impact on all components mapped in the results of this study.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that efforts to increase reading interest at SMP Negeri 3 Satu Atap Tabona occur within a complex dynamic between various literacy programs that have been implemented and the multidimensional challenges surrounding them. Programs such as 15-minute reading sessions, scheduled library visits, integration of reading-based assignments, and habituation through reading corners show varying effectiveness, with the finding that incidental and competitive activities such as review competitions actually elicit the most positive responses from students. On the other hand, the limited collection of outdated and irrelevant books, cramped library infrastructure and lack of access to technology, student preference for gadgets, low family support, and geographic isolation form a chain of mutually reinforcing obstacles. These findings emphasize a clear gap between the ideal literacy policy/program design and its implementation in the field, primarily due to the lack of adaptation to the context of one-roof school resources in remote areas. The limitations of this study lie in the scope of the location which is only one school and the relatively limited number of informants, so the findings cannot be generalized widely, and the absence of quantitative data that could enrich the mapping of student reading interest levels in a more measurable way. Based on these findings, this study recommends that further research expand the context to several one-roof schools in different areas, combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, and further explore the role of families and local communities in the literacy ecosystem. Future research should also explore community-based intervention models, the use of simple technology appropriate to rural conditions, and longitudinal studies to monitor changes in reading interest over time. Practical implications for schools and policymakers include the need to shift strategies from administratively adding programs to designing meaningful, challenging, and enjoyable reading experiences, for example by strengthening reading-based competitions, integrated literacy projects within subjects, and partnerships with community libraries. For the Department of Education, these findings highlight the importance of more realistic budget support for libraries, flexibility in literacy policies tailored to local contexts, and teacher training that emphasizes creative literacy management in schools with limited resources. Thus, this study provides an empirical basis for demonstrating that increasing reading interest in remote schools can only be achieved through a holistic, contextual, and experiential approach to student learning.

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