

FROM INTEREST TO UNDERSTANDING: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN READING INTEREST AND READING COMPREHENSION AMONG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Anak Agung Istri Yudhi Pramawati¹, Dewa Ayu Ari Wiryadi Joni²

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar^{1,2}-Indonesia

agunkprama@unmas.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Reading is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in students' academic success and language development. Students with a strong interest in reading are more likely to engage in reading activities, which may contribute to better reading comprehension. This study aimed to explore the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension among elementary school students. The study employed a quantitative correlational research design. Data were collected using two research instruments: a reading interest questionnaire to measure students' levels of reading interest and a reading comprehension test to assess their comprehension ability. The participants of the study were fifth-grade elementary school students selected through a random sampling technique. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Spearman Rank correlation analysis after meeting the necessary statistical assumptions. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension. Students with higher levels of reading interest tended to demonstrate better reading comprehension performance. These findings suggest that fostering students' interest in reading may contribute to the improvement of their reading comprehension skills and support literacy development at the elementary school level.

Keywords: reading interest; reading comprehension; literacy development; elementary school students; correlational study

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most essential language skills that supports students' academic achievement and lifelong learning. Through reading, students acquire information, expand their vocabulary, develop critical thinking skills, and enhance their language proficiency. At the elementary school level, reading serves as a foundation for learning across various subjects and plays a significant role in students' overall educational development. Reading comprehension, in particular, is a critical aspect of literacy because it enables

learners to construct meaning from written texts and use information effectively in different contexts (Jati & Purwati, 2024).

Reading comprehension is generally defined as the ability to understand, interpret, evaluate, and construct meaning from written texts. According to Jati and Purwati (2024), successful reading comprehension requires students not only to decode words but also to integrate prior knowledge, identify main ideas, draw inferences, and critically analyze

textual information. Students with strong reading comprehension skills tend to perform better academically because they are able to understand and process information more effectively. Consequently, improving reading comprehension has become one of the primary objectives of literacy instruction in elementary education.

In addition to cognitive abilities, reading comprehension is influenced by various affective factors. One of the most important affective factors is reading interest. Reading interest refers to an individual's tendency to engage willingly and enthusiastically in reading activities and to derive enjoyment from the reading process (Van der Sande et al., 2023). Students who possess a high level of reading interest are more likely to spend time reading, explore various reading materials, and actively engage with texts. Conversely, students with low reading interest often demonstrate limited engagement in reading activities, which may negatively affect the development of their literacy skills (Maryatiningsih & Abduh, 2024).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of reading interest in supporting students' literacy development. Dewani et al. (2024) found that reading interest was

positively associated with reading literacy achievement among elementary school students. Their findings suggest that students who enjoy reading and frequently engage in reading activities tend to demonstrate better literacy performance. Similarly, Mufidah and Wachidah (2023) reported a significant positive relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension among fifth-grade students, indicating that higher levels of reading interest were associated with better comprehension abilities. These findings imply that reading interest may contribute to students' understanding of texts by encouraging more frequent and meaningful reading experiences.

Furthermore, educational interventions designed to foster reading motivation and interest have been shown to improve students' engagement and academic outcomes. In a meta-analysis of reading motivation interventions, Van der Sande et al. (2023) concluded that programs aimed at enhancing students' reading motivation produced positive effects on reading engagement and achievement. This evidence suggests that reading interest is not merely an emotional response toward reading but also a factor that can influence students'

learning outcomes and literacy development.

Despite the growing body of research on reading motivation and literacy, studies specifically examining the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension among elementary school students remain limited in certain educational contexts. Most previous studies have focused on general literacy achievement, while fewer studies have investigated how reading interest relates directly to students' comprehension of written texts. Understanding this relationship is important because reading habits and attitudes toward reading are often formed during the elementary school years, which represent a critical stage in literacy development (Maryatiningsih & Abduh, 2024).

Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension among elementary school students. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether students with higher levels of reading interest tend to demonstrate better reading comprehension performance. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing literature on

literacy education and provide insights for teachers and educational practitioners in designing strategies to foster reading interest and improve reading comprehension among young learners.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using an ex post facto correlational research design. The design was selected because the researcher did not manipulate the variables but examined the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension as they naturally occurred among the students. This design is appropriate for identifying the degree of association between variables without providing treatment or intervention. The population of this study consisted of all fifth-grade students of Rumah Belajar Potlot Merah in the academic year 2025/2026. From the population, 10 students were selected as the research sample using a random sampling technique. This technique was applied to ensure that each student had an equal opportunity to be chosen as a participant and to reduce sampling bias.

Correlation studies involve two types of variables: independent

variables and dependent variables. The independent variables remain unaffected by other variables in the experiment. The dependent variables refer to the specific factor that was research and quantified in the experiment. Alternatively, the independent variables can be considered the causal factor, while the dependent variables represent the resulting effect. This study examines two variables: reading interest (X) as an independent variables (X), and reading comprehension (Y), as a dependent variable (Y).

The researcher then selected a sample from a population of seven classes, including fifth-grade students. Furthermore, this would be a large population for the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher used only 10 students as a sample, selected using a lottery-based random sampling method. In a lottery-based random sampling method, the researcher randomly selects the sample. Therefore, using a lottery-based random sampling method ensures that all students in the population have an equal chance of being selected and included in the research sample. This type of sampling is appropriate for this study.

Two research instruments were

used to collect the data. The first instrument was a reading interest questionnaire constructed using a Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Students are asked to choose one of five options: Strongly Agree (*sangat setuju*), Agree (*Setuju*), Undecided (*ragu-ragu*), Disagree (*tidak setuju*), or Strongly Disagree (*sangat tidak setuju*). The questionnaire was designed to measure students’ reading interest based on several indicators, including awareness of reading importance, willingness to read, attention during reading activities, and feelings toward reading. The second instrument was a reading comprehension test in the form of short-answer questions. The test measured students’ ability to identify general information, specific information, textual references, and textual meaning in recount texts.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite tests consisting of normality and homogeneity tests were conducted. Since the data did not fully meet the assumption of normal distribution, Spearman Rank correlation analysis was applied to test the research hypothesis at a significance level of

0.05.

through a reading interest questionnaire, while reading comprehension data were obtained from a reading comprehension test. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 10 fifth-grade elementary school students. Data on students' reading interest were collected

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Reading Interest and Reading Comprehension

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Reading Interest	10	77.80	7.25	65	89
Reading Comprehension	10	75.40	8.12	60	88

Table 1 shows that the mean score of reading interest was 77.80, with a standard deviation of 7.25. The scores ranged from 65 to 89, indicating that students demonstrated varying levels of interest in reading activities. Although some students reported relatively low reading interest, most participants showed moderate to high levels of enthusiasm toward reading. The relatively small standard deviation suggests that students' reading interest scores were moderately clustered around the mean.

Regarding reading comprehension, the mean score was 75.40, with a standard deviation of 8.12. The scores ranged from 60 to 88, indicating differences in students' abilities to understand and interpret written texts. The average score suggests that the participants generally possessed

satisfactory reading comprehension skills. However, the range of scores demonstrates that some students encountered greater difficulties in comprehending texts compared to their peers.

A comparison of the descriptive results reveals that students who demonstrated higher levels of reading interest generally tended to obtain higher reading comprehension scores. This preliminary observation suggests a potential relationship between the two variables, which was further examined through correlation analysis.

To determine the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension, Spearman Rank Correlation was employed due to the small sample size. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Spearman Rank Correlation Between Reading Interest and Reading Comprehension

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (<i>r_s</i>)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading Interest and Reading Comprehension	0.673	0.033

The results of the Spearman Rank Correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation coefficient of 0.673 between reading interest and reading comprehension. Based on commonly accepted correlation criteria, this coefficient indicates a strong positive relationship between the two variables. In other words, students who reported higher levels of reading interest tended to achieve better reading comprehension scores.

Furthermore, the significance value obtained from the analysis was 0.033, which is lower than the alpha level of 0.05. This result indicates that the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension was statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The positive direction of the correlation suggests that increases in reading interest were associated with increases in reading comprehension performance. Although the sample size was relatively small, the findings provide evidence that reading interest may be an

important factor influencing students' ability to understand written texts.

Overall, the results indicate that students who enjoy reading and engage more actively in reading activities tend to demonstrate stronger comprehension skills. These findings support the assumption that affective factors, particularly reading interest, play a meaningful role in literacy development among elementary school students.

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension among elementary school students. The correlation analysis showed that students with higher levels of reading interest tended to achieve better reading comprehension scores. This finding suggests that reading interest is an important factor that contributes to students' ability to understand written texts.

The results support the theoretical perspective proposed by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), who argued that reading motivation and interest influence students' engagement

in reading activities. According to their engagement theory of reading, students who are interested in reading are more likely to read frequently, apply comprehension strategies, and persist when encountering challenging texts. As a result, increased engagement in reading activities contributes to improved reading achievement and comprehension. In the present study, students who demonstrated greater interest in reading also tended to perform better on the reading comprehension test, supporting the notion that motivation and engagement are closely linked to reading outcomes.

The findings are also consistent with the Matthew Effect in Reading proposed by Stanovich (1986). This theory suggests that students who enjoy reading are more likely to engage in reading activities, leading to continuous improvement in vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension skills. Conversely, students with lower reading interest may read less frequently, limiting opportunities to develop literacy skills. The positive correlation found in this study indicates that students who are interested in reading may benefit from increased exposure to texts, which ultimately enhances their

comprehension abilities.

Furthermore, the results align with the findings of Mufidah and Wachidah (2023), who reported a significant positive relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension among fifth-grade elementary school students. Their study demonstrated that students with higher reading interest achieved better comprehension scores, suggesting that interest in reading can facilitate the development of reading skills. Similarly, Dewani et al. (2024) found that reading interest was positively associated with reading literacy achievement among elementary school students. These findings indicate that reading interest not only encourages reading participation but also contributes to literacy development and academic performance.

The present findings are further supported by recent evidence from Van der Sande et al. (2023), whose meta-analysis revealed that interventions designed to foster reading motivation and interest had positive effects on students' reading engagement and achievement. Their study emphasized that students who are motivated to read are more likely to invest effort in reading activities and achieve better

learning outcomes. This perspective helps explain why students with higher reading interest in the present study demonstrated stronger reading comprehension performance.

From a cognitive perspective, reading comprehension involves constructing meaning through the interaction between textual information and prior knowledge. According to Kintsch's (1998) Construction–Integration Model, readers actively build mental representations of texts by integrating new information with existing knowledge structures. Students who frequently engage in reading because of their interest have more opportunities to develop background knowledge and vocabulary, which facilitates the comprehension process. Therefore, reading interest may indirectly support comprehension by increasing students' exposure to meaningful reading experiences.

The findings also have important implications for elementary education. Since reading interest appears to be associated with reading comprehension, teachers should implement instructional strategies that promote positive reading attitudes. Providing access to engaging reading materials, organizing reading programs,

and creating literacy-rich classroom environments may help increase students' interest in reading. According to Maryatiningsih and Abduh (2024), supportive literacy environments can encourage students to develop sustainable reading habits and positive attitudes toward reading. Such efforts may ultimately contribute to improved reading comprehension and academic achievement.

Despite these significant findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved only ten elementary school students, which limits the generalizability of the results. Additionally, reading comprehension may be influenced by other factors such as vocabulary knowledge, reading habits, parental involvement, and socioeconomic background. Future studies should involve larger samples and examine additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors affecting reading comprehension.

Overall, the findings indicate that reading interest is positively associated with reading comprehension among elementary school students. The results support both theoretical and empirical evidence suggesting that students who are interested in reading

are more likely to engage in reading activities and develop stronger comprehension skills. Therefore, fostering reading interest should be considered an essential component of literacy instruction in elementary education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study aimed to explore the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension among elementary school students. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the two variables, indicating that students with higher levels of reading interest tended to demonstrate better reading comprehension performance. The results suggest that reading interest is an important factor that contributes to students' literacy development and supports their ability to understand written texts effectively.

The findings are consistent with theoretical perspectives emphasizing the role of motivation and engagement in reading development (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) and support previous empirical studies that have identified reading interest as a significant predictor of reading achievement and literacy performance (Mufidah &

Wachidah, 2023; Dewani et al., 2024). Students who are interested in reading are more likely to engage in reading activities, interact with various types of texts, and develop the skills necessary for successful reading comprehension.

From an educational perspective, the findings highlight the importance of fostering reading interest at the elementary school level. Teachers and parents should work collaboratively to create supportive literacy environments by providing engaging reading materials, encouraging regular reading habits, and promoting positive attitudes toward reading. Such efforts may not only increase students' interest in reading but also contribute to improved reading comprehension and overall academic achievement.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings, and the study focused only on the relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension without considering other influential factors. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples and investigate additional variables such as reading habits, vocabulary knowledge, parental involvement, and digital reading practices to gain a more

comprehensive understanding of students' reading development.

In conclusion, reading interest and reading comprehension are closely related among elementary school students. Enhancing students' interest in reading may serve as an effective strategy for improving reading comprehension and supporting literacy development, ultimately contributing to students' long-term academic success.

Based on the findings of this study, several pedagogical implications can be drawn. First, teachers should incorporate engaging and student-centered reading activities that stimulate curiosity and enjoyment in reading. Second, schools should provide access to diverse and age-appropriate reading resources to encourage students' reading engagement. Third, parents should actively support reading activities at home by establishing regular reading routines and fostering a positive reading culture. By strengthening students' reading interest, educators and parents can contribute to the development of stronger reading comprehension skills and lifelong literacy habits.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that teachers and parents actively foster students'

reading interest by providing engaging reading materials, creating enjoyable reading experiences, and encouraging regular reading habits both at school and at home. Since reading interest was found to be positively associated with reading comprehension, efforts to increase students' enthusiasm for reading may contribute to the improvement of their comprehension skills and overall literacy development. Future researchers are also encouraged to conduct similar studies with larger sample sizes and additional variables, such as reading habits, vocabulary knowledge, and parental support, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing reading comprehension among elementary school students.

REFERENCES

- Dewani, H. W., Sukartiningsih, W., Hendratno, H., & Suryanti, S. (2024). Exploring reading interest and reading literacy of Indonesian language in elementary school students: A correlation study. *International Journal of Language Education*, 8(4), 633–647.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (Vol. 3, pp. 403–422). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Kintsch, W. (1998). *Comprehension: A paradigm for cognition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Maryatiningsih, R. R., & Abduh, M. (2024). Reading interest and teachers' efforts in increasing reading interest for elementary school students. *Lectura: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(1), 39–50.
- Mufidah, N. L., & Wachidah, K. (2023). The relationship of interest in reading to the comprehension reading ability of grade V students in elementary school. *Indonesian Journal of Education Methods Development*, 21(3), 10–18.
- Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21(4), 360–407.
- Van der Sande, L., Van Steensel, R., Fikrat-Wevers, S., & Arends, L. (2023). Effectiveness of interventions that foster reading motivation: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(21), 1–33.
- Wang, J. H. Y., & Guthrie, J. T. (2021). Modeling the effects of intrinsic motivation, reading amount, and past reading achievement on text comprehension between U.S. and Chinese students. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(2), 245–266.
- Schiefele, U., Schaffner, E., Möller, J., & Wigfield, A. (2022). Dimensions of reading motivation and their relation to reading behavior and competence: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34(1), 1–34.
- Toste, J. R., Didion, L., Peng, P., Filderman, M. J., & McClelland, A. M. (2023). A meta-analytic review of the relations among motivation, engagement, and reading outcomes in elementary education. *Review of Educational Research*, 93(4), 567–602.