

# Creating a Smart Generation: The Role of Education, Family, and Environment in Increasing Reading Interest

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## Abstract

Education plays a central role in shaping character and preparing future generations. One of the fundamental aspects of education is reading, which is not only a means to obtain information, but also to develop critical thinking and broaden horizons. Nonetheless, low interest in reading among adolescents is a major problem that is influenced by various external and internal factors. This research aims to explore the role of education, family and environment in improving reading interest in the younger generation. Using a qualitative approach with a literature study method, this research analyses the various factors that influence students' reading interest and identifies strategies to foster reading interest through more varied education, parental support, and more effective library utilisation. The results show the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents and the environment to create a reading culture that supports the intellectual and character development of the younger generation.

**Keywords:** Education, Reading Interest, Young Generation, Family, Library, Literacy, Social Environment

## 1. Introduction

Education is one of the main pillars in shaping character and preparing the next generation of the nation. As a conscious effort to pass on cultural values and develop individual potential, education has an important role in creating a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also wise in behaviour. One of the fundamental aspects of education is reading, which not only serves as a tool to obtain information, but also as a means to hone critical thinking skills and broaden horizons (Maharani, Selvina, 2023).

Reading is the world's window that can open the gates of success. Through reading, one can explore different thoughts, cultures, and knowledge from the past to prepare for a brighter future (Prasrihamni et al., 2022). Reading is a form of appreciation for existing heritage, as well as a way to develop oneself. As Abdul Rahman said, reading plays an important role in realising a smart and brilliant generation. By understanding every word we read, we not only obtain information, but also absorb the meaning contained in it (Tabi'in et al., 2022).

The reading process has a broad meaning, in accordance with the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), which states that reading is an activity that involves comprehension, spelling, pronunciation, and forecasting or understanding of a message conveyed through writing. Thus, reading is not just a mechanical activity in identifying words, but a deep intellectual process to understand the message that the author wants to convey. As explained by Y. Budi Artati and Henry Guntur Tarigan, reading is a process to obtain messages contained in writing or words.

However, the problem that is often encountered among teenagers is the low interest in reading. Lack of enthusiasm for reading can be influenced by various factors, such as teachers, parents, peers,



and the surrounding environment. Teachers have an important role in developing students' interest in reading, by providing learning that is interesting and appropriate to students' needs. Varied learning techniques, including the use of illustrations or pictures, can help students to be more interested in reading. In addition, teachers' understanding of students' individual characteristics also determines the success in teaching reading (Bahrudin & Yuliawati, 2022).

Parents also have a big role in fostering children's interest in reading. Many parents do not realise how important reading is for children's development. They often let their children spend more time playing, without realising that by reading, children can develop their full potential. The advice given by parents should be done with gentleness so that children feel valued and motivated to read (Nabilah et al., 2023).

In addition to external factors such as teachers and parents, children's own internal factors also influence their interest in reading. Some children may not be interested in reading despite support from the environment (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Therefore, it is important to provide the right approach according to the psychological needs and character of each child. Through proper guidance, children can be taught to understand that reading is not just an activity, but an important investment for the future.

With support from education, family and the environment, it is hoped that interest in reading among the younger generation will increase. This will not only have an impact on their intellectual intelligence, but will also shape a better character, which in turn will build a smarter and more civilised nation. This research aims to explore the role of education, family and environment in improving reading interest in the younger generation.

## 2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method to understand the role of education, family and environment in increasing interest in reading in the younger generation. The main data sources were books, journal articles, research reports and related documents.

Data collection was done by identifying and analysing relevant literature sources. The data was analysed descriptively to identify the main themes and efforts to increase interest in reading, using content analysis techniques and comparisons between sources. To ensure data validity, source triangulation was conducted by comparing various trusted literature to ensure consistency of information.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Indonesia still faces the problem of low reading interest, ranking 60th out of 61 countries in the 'Most Littered National in the World' study by Central Connecticut State University in 2016. Contributing factors include monotonous books, expensive book prices, and difficulties for some families in fulfilling their children's literacy needs. Reading interest in students is also influenced by internal factors, such as low reading ability, as well as external factors from the family and school environment (Wahyu et al., 2023).

PISA research shows that many Indonesian students can only read without understanding the meaning of the reading, with around 37.6% only being able to read the text without understanding the content, and 24.8% only being able to relate the text with a little information (Wahyu et al., 2023). This shows the need for efforts to improve reading skills so that students can benefit from reading activities

in their learning process. Reading interest has a significant impact on students' enthusiasm and learning outcomes (Abidin, 2020).

Guidance and Counselling (BK) teachers have an important role in changing students' mindsets and fostering their enthusiasm for reading. As a trusted companion, the counselling teacher must recognise and understand the abilities of each student in order to develop their potential to the fullest. With the right support, it is hoped that students can be more motivated to read and increase their interest in reading.

### **3.1. Problems of reading interest among students**

The problem of reading interest often arises in school children, especially those who are in the vulnerable age period or adolescents. Many factors influence the low interest in reading among students. One of them is the influence of social media which is now very dominant. Apps like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok often distract students from reading. Dependence on social media is like an addiction, which makes students prefer to spend time in cyberspace rather than reading books (Salsabila et al., 2023). Although it may not be realised at first, the impact will be felt over time, when the laziness of reading begins to emerge. Therefore, it is important to provide motivation and direction so that students can regain their interest in reading (Kurniawan & Parnawi, 2023).

In addition, online gaming is also a major cause of the lack of interest in reading. Many teenagers, especially male students, are more interested in spending time playing games, such as Mobile Legends, than studying or reading. These games offer enthralling entertainment, making them more enthusiastic about engaging in the game rather than seeking knowledge from books. In addition, the monotonous and unvaried concept of reading is also the cause of this (Aulia et al., 2023). Reading methods that are not interesting or limited to the classroom make reading activities boring. Teachers can provide a more varied approach, such as taking students to read outdoors or inviting them to read more interesting reading materials (Lestari et al., 2021).

Less positive associations also affect students' interest in reading. During the school years, many students tend to follow their friends in doing activities that are not useful, such as playing endlessly or dating without considering the impact. This causes them to forget their obligations as students and keeps them away from educational activities (Lestari et al., 2021). In addition, the ease of obtaining instant information through Google or watching television also plays a role in declining interest in reading. Students prefer to find instant answers on the internet or watch entertainment programmes rather than reading books, which requires process and effort. Last but not least, unattractive literacy in school libraries and limited reading materials also contribute to low interest in reading. All these factors are interrelated and need to be addressed so that students' interest in reading can increase (Sumarto, 2019).

Looking at the various problems that exist, those of us who are older should be responsible for providing advice, guidance and direction to them so that they do not get caught up in things that are detrimental to themselves. By reading diligently, we can gain intelligence and a broader insight. Every word we read contains knowledge and lessons that can enrich our understanding. The spirit of reading that is embedded in us will make us wiser in choosing activities, because when the spirit of learning has mastered the soul, harmful things will feel difficult to do, and we prefer to fill our time with useful things.

### **3.2. Growing Interest in Reading Through Libraries**

One way to overcome students' low interest in reading is to increase the variety of interesting reading materials. One of them is through more effective library management as a means to increase students' interest in reading. Libraries have an important role in shaping reading habits among

students, as we found in the public junior high school we are researching. However, the current condition of the library is still inadequate, one of which is due to the limited reading materials that can attract students' attention. This results in a lack of interest in reading from students (Karimah et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to add a variety of interesting books, so that students feel curious and encouraged to read more books.

In addition, an ideal library should be able to create a comfortable and attractive atmosphere for students. Cleanliness and comfort are the determining factors whether students will feel at home in it or not. With a conducive atmosphere, students will more easily feel calm and comfortable, so that their interest in reading books can increase. This supportive atmosphere can affect students' attitudes and attention to reading activities. According to Nyoman Sudiana, one effective way to foster students' interest in reading is to create a beautiful reading corner around the library or even in the classroom area. This reading corner can be equipped with a beautiful garden and cool air, creating a comfortable environment for reading (Karimah et al., 2024). Dengan adanya pojok baca asri ini, siswa akan merasa lebih tenang dan nyaman dalam membaca, sehingga minat mereka terhadap buku akan terus berkembang.

Libraries have a very important role in fostering interest in reading among students. There are various ways that libraries can achieve this goal. One of them is by providing a variety of reading materials that are interesting and in accordance with student interests (ZAM, 2021). By doing so, students will feel more interested in coming and reading in the library. In addition, the library can also play a role in linking the subjects taught to tasks they can do in the library. This will give students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the lessons through relevant and interesting reading resources.

To make it easier for students to find appropriate reading materials, the library needs to provide adequate facilities, such as clear and easily accessible catalogue arrangements. Providing freedom to read without noise is also important, because with a quiet atmosphere, students can focus more and enjoy reading activities. A clean and comfortable library will make students feel at home in it (Restianty, 2018). A neat and pleasant environment will create a favourable atmosphere for reading. Moreover, the library should instil in its users the awareness that reading has many benefits and is an important activity for their lives.

Libraries can also utilise certain moments, such as the month of May which is celebrated as National Book Day, to further motivate students to read. Competitions, such as reading interest competitions or reading favouritism competitions, can be organised to foster a competitive spirit in reading (Nuzulia, 2022). In addition, giving awards to students who read or borrow the most books in the library can be an additional motivation. With these methods, the library can be an effective tool to foster a high interest in reading among students.

The school library has a vital role in supporting the development of students' potential, especially in terms of reading interest. As one of the important facilities, the library serves to provide a variety of reading materials that can increase students' enthusiasm for learning and interest in reading (Sumarto, 2019). According to Article 35 of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System, every educational unit, whether organised by the government or the community, is required to provide learning resources, one of which is a library. The existence of libraries in schools, as a learning medium, certainly has a big role in facilitating students in accessing the reading materials they need (Asyarotin and Maulidya, 2018).

Teachers play an important role in empowering the school library as a means to increase students' interest in reading. Concrete steps taken by teachers can strengthen the existence of the library as an attractive place for students. One way is to collaborate with the librarian to select books that suit

students' interests and needs. Interesting new books can also be displayed in a place that is easily visible to students, so that they are interested in reading them. Teachers can also give assignments to students to look for books that are relevant to the subject matter, such as books related to Indonesian language lessons.

In addition, teachers can set a special day for compulsory reading in the library. A regular schedule of library visits for each class will create a conducive reading atmosphere and increase the regularity of the activity. Thus, students will feel comfortable and more interested in visiting the library as part of their routine.

To further motivate students, teachers can organise various interesting activities, such as reading stories from books related to subjects, magazines, or newspapers. Visiting the library once a week can also be done to introduce more reading materials to students. In the classroom, teachers can create a simple reading corner that can attract students' attention to read more books (Restianty, 2018).

Teachers can also require students to read for 15 minutes every day before learning begins, supervised by the teacher. In commemoration of national holidays, teachers can organise competitions related to reading, such as poetry or drama competitions. Students can be assigned to make clippings from magazines or newspapers every semester, to increase their creativity in reading.

In addition, teachers can assign students to answer questions sourced from library books every day, as well as appoint students to read the material being discussed in front of the class. Every week, teachers can also assign students to look for additional information in the library related to the subject matter.

With these steps, it is hoped that students' interest in reading will increase and make the library a fun place, a place of learning that can develop themselves better.

### **3.3. Overcoming Reading Interest Problems Through Counselling Guidance**

Building a smart generation requires collaboration between education, family and environment. One aspect that is equally important in achieving this is increasing students' interest in reading. Guidance and Counselling (BK) has a strategic role in supporting students' development, especially in overcoming problems faced, including low reading interest. BK services provide space for students to achieve optimal development, both in emotional, social and academic aspects. In this case, BK services function as a tool that helps students overcome the anxiety or difficulties they face, including problems in terms of reading interest (Rizkia et al., 2024).

One of the challenges that students, especially those around the age of 13, often face is low interest in reading. At this age, intellectual development is crucial. Therefore, it is important for students to be encouraged to increase their reading interest, which is the cornerstone of effective learning (Restianty, 2018). Group counselling services can be one of the appropriate solutions to deal with this problem. In the context of BK services, group counselling provides an opportunity for students to share experiences and learn together in a supportive atmosphere. Through this service, students can not only improve their reading skills but also broaden their horizons in a more interactive way.

Group counselling conducted with about 4-12 students can help them to manage social adjustment issues or personal concerns that may hinder their development, including in terms of reading interest (Karimah et al., 2024). With the interaction in the group, students can feel more motivated to participate in the activities held, including activities that can stimulate their interest in reading. This service is expected to form better reading habits and trigger positive curiosity in students.

The importance of the role of counselling in increasing students' interest in reading is also in line with the purpose of the counselling service itself, which according to Bimo Walgito, is to help achieve educational and teaching goals, as well as individual welfare (Budaya et al., 2022). Thus, counselling



does not only focus on solving personal problems, but also plays a role in building a smart and capable generation. With the support of guidance and counselling services, it is expected that students' interest in reading will continue to increase, which in turn will form a generation that is better prepared to face future challenges (Maharani, 2023).

#### 4. Conclusion

Reading interest in Indonesia is still relatively low, influenced by various factors, including the high price of books, the dominance of social media, and the limited variety of interesting reading materials. Research shows that many students have difficulty in understanding reading texts, which affects their learning outcomes. In this case, the role of the Guidance and Counselling Teacher (BK) is very important to help change the mindset of students and foster their enthusiasm for reading. In addition, a comfortable and attractive library and co-operation between teachers and counsellors can contribute greatly to increasing students' interest in reading.

To increase reading interest, Guidance and Counselling services can be an effective solution, especially through group counselling that helps students overcome social and academic challenges that hinder their development. With appropriate measures, such as providing interesting reading materials and building enjoyable reading habits, it is expected that students' reading interest can increase, which in turn will have a positive effect on the quality of education and students' ability to face future challenges.

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