The Influence of School Context on Elementary Students' Reading Interest: A Descriptive Study in Cirebon City

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to examine the influence of school context on the reading interest of elementary school students in Cirebon City. The school context refers to teacher support, the availability of literacy facilities (particularly libraries), and the implementation of school-based literacy programs. A quantitative descriptive approach was employed, using a reading interest questionnaire administered to grade II and III students across four public elementary schools. Data were analyzed through validity and reliability tests, descriptive statistics, and one-way ANOVA to identify differences in reading interest among schools. The findings reveal a significant influence of school context on students' reading interest, with schools demonstrating stronger literacy support consistently reporting higher engagement levels. These results underscore the need for context-sensitive literacy strategies, including active teacher involvement, access to engaging reading materials, and a sustained culture of reading. The study offers actionable insights for policymakers and educators in designing effective and sustainable literacy interventions in primary education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading interest serves as a fundamental pillar in the development of literacy competence and overall academic achievement. At the elementary level, reading interest reflects not only students' enjoyment of reading but also their emotional, motivational, and cognitive involvement in literacy activities (Schiefele et al., 2012). According to Guthrie et al. (2007), it plays a central role in engaged reading, influencing both comprehension and long-term literacy development. Despite its significance, Indonesian students' reading engagement remains relatively low. Reports from UNESCO (2012) and Central Connecticut State University (2016) highlight the country's weak reading culture, where reading has yet to become an integral part of students' daily routines.

One key factor influencing students' reading interest is the school context, which includes the learning environment, instructional practices, access to literacy resources, and school-wide programs. Numerous studies support this claim. For instance, Käsper et al. (2020) found that teaching strategies, appropriate reading materials, and a supportive classroom climate improve students' reading outcomes and interest. Similarly, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) emphasize that reading engagement increases when students can choose their reading materials, participate in discussions, and receive encouragement from teachers and peers. Kanonire et al. (2020) further note that both intrinsic motivation (e.g., curiosity) and extrinsic motivation (e.g., rewards) contribute to improved reading performance, even after accounting for students' prior abilities. These studies collectively show that pedagogical support is strongly associated with students' level of reading interest.

Beyond pedagogy, physical infrastructure also plays a crucial role. Mol and Bus (2011) and Hidi (2001) highlight that access to varied and engaging books helps foster reading habits from an early age. However, many Indonesian elementary schools lack sufficient literacy facilities. Dewani et al. (2024) report that even in schools

with moderate environmental support, reading interest remains low without consistent programmatic interventions. Social influences, such as peer norms and classroom reading culture, further shape engagement. Schüller et al. (2017) found that children surrounded by literate peers and strong reading cultures are more likely to read voluntarily.

In Cirebon City, where schools vary widely in terms of socio-cultural background, infrastructure, and literacy program implementation, it is essential to understand how school-level factors contribute to students' reading engagement. While some schools actively implement the School Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Sekolah), others struggle with limited resources and institutional support. This study seeks to investigate how components of the school context—including teacher support, reading material access, and literacy programming—contribute to variations in students' reading interest. By using a quantitative descriptive approach and applying statistical techniques such as validity and reliability testing and one-way ANOVA, this research provides empirical evidence on the relationship between school context and reading engagement. It also aims to inform literacy strategies that are more responsive to the contextual realities of Indonesian elementary education.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach to systematically examine how variations in school context affect the reading interest of elementary school students. This research design was selected because it enables the objective description and comparison of educational phenomena using numerical data, without manipulating variables. The goal is to portray the current condition of students' reading interest as it relates to differing school environments, and to identify patterns that may inform educational practice and policy (Creswell, 2012).

The population in this study consisted of students in grades II and III from four public elementary schools in Cirebon City, West Java, Indonesia. These grade levels were chosen because they represent a critical period in the development of reading habits and motivation. The total number of respondents was 100 students, with 25 students drawn from each participating school. The selection of schools was done purposively, considering factors such as school location (urban vs. semi-urban), the availability of reading facilities, and the presence or absence of structured school literacy programs. Within each school, students were selected randomly from the class attendance list to ensure proportional representation and reduce the risk of sampling bias.

This approach allowed for a balanced comparison across different school contexts. The independent variable in this study is the school context, which was carefully operationalized through three main indicators: (1) the availability and accessibility of literacy resources, including the presence of libraries, reading corners, and classroom book collections; (2) the implementation of literacy-related programs, such as morning reading routines, literacy campaigns, and school-level reading competitions; and (3) the degree of teacher involvement in literacy development, including the use of reading strategies in daily lessons, teacher-led reading discussions, and encouragement of independent reading.

These indicators were identified through document analysis, brief field observations, and informal interviews with school staff. Each school's profile was then categorized based on the relative strength or weakness of these components, allowing the school context to serve as a meaningful categorical independent variable. The dependent variable is students' reading interest, which reflects students' emotional and motivational engagement with reading activities. This was measured using a self-report questionnaire adapted from Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) theory of reading engagement, and further modified to suit the learning context of Indonesian elementary students. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items, grouped into four dimensions: intrinsic reading motivation, reading habits, environmental support (teachers and peers), and students' self-perception of reading ability.

Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Always). To ensure the quality of the instrument, a validity test was conducted using the item-total correlation method with Pearson's Product Moment. With a critical r value of 0.195 (N = 100; $\alpha = 0.05$), all items showed correlation coefficients above the threshold and were thus considered valid. The reliability of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in a coefficient of 0.843, which indicates a high level of internal consistency (Sugiyono, 2017; Arikunto, 2010).

These results demonstrate that the instrument is both statistically sound and suitable for further data analysis. Data collection was carried out through direct distribution of the questionnaires during school hours, with the assistance of classroom teachers to help explain the items to younger students when necessary. Additional data regarding the school context were collected through structured observation checklists and documentation review (e.g., school literacy plans, photos of reading corners, and teacher interview notes).

To analyze the data, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize students' reading interest at each school. In order to test whether the differences in reading interest were statistically

significant across schools with different literacy contexts, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This test was chosen because the independent variable (school context) consisted of more than two categorical groups, and the goal was to determine whether there were significant mean differences in reading interest scores among these groups. The use of ANOVA allowed the researcher to assess whether contextual differences among schools corresponded to measurable variations in student reading interest levels.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire's validity was assessed using item-total correlation through Pearson's Product Moment. All 20 items demonstrated correlation coefficients above 0.30 ($p < 0.05$), confirming that each item contributes meaningfully to measuring the construct of reading interest. These results indicate the instrument is empirically valid, capturing the emotional and motivational dimensions of students' engagement with reading.

The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and resulted in a value of 0.890, indicating a high level of internal consistency. According to George and Mallery (2003), values between 0.80 and 0.90 are categorized as "good," showing that all questionnaire items work cohesively to measure a single construct. No item demonstrated a disruptive influence on reliability, as shown by the consistent "alpha if item deleted" scores. Therefore, the questionnaire was deemed reliable for further analysis. The Alpha value can be interpreted as follows:

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha results of the reading interest questionnaire

Alpha Value (α)	Interpretation
$\alpha \geq 0.90$	Very tall
$0.80 \leq \alpha < 0.90$	Tall
$0.70 \leq \alpha < 0.80$	Enough
$0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.70$	Low
$0.50 \leq \alpha < 0.60$	Bad
$\alpha < 0.50$	Can not accepted

Table 2. Results of the Reading Interest Questionnaire Reliability Test

Statistics	Mark
Amount Respondents	100
Number of Items (Items Statement)	20
Cronbach's Alpha	0.890
Category Reliability	Very tall

After the instrument is validated and declared valid, the next stage is to test its reliability. The reliability of an instrument is a measure that shows the extent to which the instrument is consistent in measuring the same construct repeatedly. In this study, reliability was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, because the questionnaire used had a Likert scale and consisted of several statement items that measured one construct, namely reading interest. Based on the results of data processing, the Cronbach's Alpha value was obtained as 0.890. This figure shows that the instrument has very high internal consistency, because according to George and Mallery (2003), the Cronbach's Alpha value that is in the range of 0.80 to 0.90 is included in the "good" category, while values above 0.90 are categorized as "excellent". Thus, the value of 0.890 approaches the "very high" category, and shows that this instrument can be relied on to measure students' reading interest in a stable and consistent manner.

The results also indicate that all items in the questionnaire work harmoniously in measuring the same construct, namely reading interest. There are no items that deviate significantly from the direction of measurement, which means that there is no need to delete any items in the instrument. This is also reinforced by the reliability value if the item is deleted (Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted), which remains in the high range, indicating that each item makes a positive contribution to the overall reliability. This strong internal consistency is very important, especially in educational research using psychometric instruments, because it reflects the stability of respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards the objects being measured, in this case reading activities and habits. Thus, it can be concluded that the reading interest questionnaire in this study is not only valid, but also very reliable, and can be used to measure the level of reading interest of elementary school students accurately and sustainably.

Descriptive statistics revealed that the level of reading interest varied among the four schools involved in the study. SD Negeri C reported the highest average score (75.6), while SD Negeri D had the lowest (68.7).

This variation suggests that differences in school context—such as the presence of active literacy programs or teacher involvement—may influence students' reading motivation.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Reading Interest Based on School

no	School	Number of Respondents	Average Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Standard Deviation
	State Elementary School A	25	73.2	61	84	6.5
	State Elementary School B	25	70.4	56	80	6.9
	State Elementary School C	25	75.6	63	87	5.7
	State Elementary School D	25	68.7	54	78	7.2
	Total/Average	100	72.0	58.5	82.25	6.575

Based on the data above, the reading interest of students from all schools is still in the category that can be further developed. The high reading interest in SD Negeri C, Cirebon City, for example, is likely influenced by a more active literacy culture, such as the habit of reading every morning, the existence of an active library, or teachers who are directly involved in guiding students' reading habits. Conversely, the lowest score in SD Negeri D, Cirebon City can be an indicator of a less than optimal literacy atmosphere in the school environment. This finding is in line with Wigfield et al.'s (2016) statement that reading interest is greatly influenced by the social and learning context in which students are located, including teacher support, availability of reading materials, and literacy models from the surrounding environment. Another study that supports these results is from Dewani et al. (2024), which shows that motivation and attention when reading are significant indicators in shaping student literacy, especially at the elementary school level.

Furthermore, Becker et al. (2010) stated that students who have had an interest in reading since early grades will show higher literacy results at the next level. This means that efforts to instill an interest in reading must be carried out early and consistently from various aspects of school life. Overall, these descriptive data provide an overview that although the average reading interest of students is in the medium to high category, there is still a lot of room for school-based literacy interventions. This can be done through a comprehensive approach such as: Improving the quality and access to reading materials, encouraging teacher involvement in guiding reading activities, and creating a school climate that values literacy activities.

To test whether there is a significant difference in the level of students' reading interest based on the school context, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted. This test was used because it involves one categorical independent variable school with four groups, and one numeric dependent variable reading interest score. The results of the ANOVA test showed that there was a significant difference in reading interest scores between the four schools. A summary of the test results is presented in the following table:

Table 4. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source of Variation	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	812.32	3	270.77	5,984	0.001
Intercept	511020.00	1	511020.00	11292.62	0,000
School (Context)	812.32	3	270.77	5,984	0.001
Error	4365.84	96	45.48		
Total	5178.16	99			
Corrected Total	5178.16	99			

A one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether the observed differences in reading interest were statistically significant. The grouping variable was each school, representing different contextual conditions (e.g., availability of reading facilities, teacher support, literacy programming). The ANOVA results showed a

significant effect of school context on students' reading interest: $F(3, 96) = 5.984$, $p = 0.001$. This finding suggests that differences in the school environment are associated with measurable variations in students' motivation to read.

These findings align with studies by Käsper et al. (2020) and Guthrie & Wigfield (2000), which emphasize the role of teacher strategies and classroom literacy culture in shaping students' reading behavior. Schools that integrate reading into daily routines—such as morning reading programs or class-based reading corners—are more likely to cultivate higher reading interest. Dewani et al. (2024) also noted that students in environments with structured literacy support display stronger intrinsic motivation toward reading.

On the other hand, schools that still rely on conventional teaching models without integrating literacy activities into daily learning routines often fail to foster their students' interest in reading. This is reinforced by Wigfield & Guthrie (2016) who stated that reading interest is situational and is largely determined by external support such as classroom atmosphere, teacher support, peers, and school facilities. The difference in reading interest scores between schools with the highest average (State Elementary School C) and the lowest (State Elementary School D) most likely reflects the level of maturity of the school's literacy culture. Schools with reading habituation programs such as "15 minutes of reading before class", the presence of reading corners in each class, and access to interesting story books will provide a more positive and enjoyable literacy experience for students.

This is reinforced by Dewani et al. (2024) who stated that reading interest is closely related to motivation and attention when reading, and these indicators will develop if schools provide adequate opportunities, time, and space for reading activities. Schools that succeed in creating a culture of literacy not only provide books, but also instill reading habits as part of school life. Teachers become literacy models, students are invited to discuss the contents of the reading, and literacy activities are made meaningful and relevant to students' lives. This is where the school context plays a role as a "forming environment" that distinguishes one institution from another.

The influence of situational interest (Hidi, 2001) is evident here: students' motivation is shaped not only by personal inclination but also by their school environment. The difference in average scores between SD Negeri C and SD Negeri D reflects how school context, including leadership, infrastructure, and pedagogical culture, can foster or hinder reading interest.

Although these results are promising, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the use of self-report questionnaires may introduce bias, especially among younger children. Second, the study's generalizability is limited by the sample size and geographic scope (four schools in one city). Future research could benefit from expanding the sample and employing mixed-method approaches to capture deeper insights into the literacy experiences of students and educators. In summary, this study confirms that school context matters. Reading interest is not merely an individual trait but a result of dynamic interactions within a school's social, instructional, and physical environment. Effective literacy programs require not only resources but also a consistent school-wide culture that values and promotes reading.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that school context has a significant influence on elementary students' engagement with reading. Differences in the availability of literacy resources, teacher support, and implementation of reading programs contribute to variations in students' motivation to read. The findings demonstrate that students in schools with stronger literacy environments—such as active teacher involvement, accessible reading facilities, and structured reading routines—exhibit higher levels of interest and participation in reading activities.

These results highlight the importance of designing literacy programs that are both inclusive and context-sensitive. Teachers and school leaders play a central role in cultivating positive reading habits by integrating reading into the school culture, creating engaging reading spaces, and providing meaningful support. For policymakers, this study offers evidence to prioritize literacy interventions that strengthen infrastructure, empower educators, and embed reading into students' daily routines.

While the findings are encouraging, further research is needed to explore how specific components of the school context interact with students' reading behaviors over time. Expanding the sample and incorporating qualitative data could deepen the understanding of effective literacy practices in diverse school settings.

Ultimately, to foster lifelong reading habits, sustained and continuous literacy efforts must be maintained from early education through higher levels of schooling, ensuring consistent support for students' literacy development at every stage.

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