

## Librarian Service Management to Improve Students' Reading Interest: A Case Study at SDN 22 Panai Hulu

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse librarian service management in increasing students' reading interest at SDN 22 Panai Hulu. The research was motivated by the low level of reading interest among elementary school students, which is influenced by several factors such as limited access to engaging reading materials and the growing impact of digital distractions, particularly social media. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study involved eight purposively selected participants, including the school principal, librarian, administrative staff, and students. Data were collected through interviews and observations, then analysed using Miles and Huberman's model, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that optimising library functions, creating a comfortable and engaging reading environment, and addressing literacy challenges in the digital era are critical strategies in fostering students' reading interest. Librarians play a proactive role in curating relevant books and organising literacy programs that appeal to students. The study concludes that effective librarian service management can significantly improve reading motivation, and school libraries must continue adapting to technological advancements to fulfil the evolving literacy needs of students.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Modern libraries have undergone a significant transformation from book-storage institutions to dynamic, user-centred knowledge centres [1], [2], [3]. Effective library service management, as noted by Fauziyah and Marlina, requires an integrated approach involving human resources, technology, and infrastructure to meet user needs. A critical aspect of this transformation is improving librarian competency, which directly contributes to the development of high-quality services. In the digital era, libraries are expected to adapt swiftly to the evolving information needs of the public. Moreover, the integration of

technology into library services enhances accessibility and increases user satisfaction [4], [5], [6].

Academic libraries that implement quality management systems show measurable improvements in service efficiency and user satisfaction. The regular use of evaluation tools, such as the SERVQUAL method, allows for the identification of discrepancies between user expectations and actual service delivery [7], [8], [9]. In this context, library service models that prioritise user experience (UX) have become increasingly relevant. Zuniananta [10] further highlights the strategic use of social media as a means to communicate and promote library services, particularly to engage the digital-native generation. Moreover, collaborative practices among libraries and stakeholders are essential for optimising resource sharing and implementing best practices in service management. Responsive collection development aligned with curriculum and research needs is also fundamental to effective university library management [11], [12], [13].

Globally, school libraries have followed similar trends in innovation. In Finland, school libraries function as *learning commons*, integrating digital tools with traditional services. Reports indicate that 92% of elementary students in Finland visit the library at least three times a week, with an average reading time of six hours per week. In Singapore, the “Smart Library Initiative,” which merges librarian services with artificial intelligence, has led to a 78% increase in reading interest over the past two years [14], [15], [16].

Despite these advancements, a 2023 UNESCO report identifies a stark contrast in access to and quality of school library services between developed and developing countries. In OECD countries, the average ratio of professional librarians to students is 1:300. In contrast, in developing nations, it often reaches 1:1500. Correspondingly, data from the World Library Association (2023) show that countries with ideal librarian-student ratios demonstrate literacy rates up to 40% higher than those with insufficient staffing [17], [18], [19].

Indonesia faces significant challenges in this area. The 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked Indonesia 74th out of 79 countries in reading proficiency, with an average score of 371, far below the OECD average of 487 [20]. The World Bank further reports that 55% of Indonesian students experience “learning poverty,” defined as the inability to read and understand basic texts by age ten.

Challenges in the digital era further complicate the decline in reading interest. Yusuf and Prasetyo identify several contributing factors, including (1) excessive use of gadgets and social media, (2) lack of family support, (3) limited access to engaging reading materials, and (4) suboptimal school library services [21], [22], [23].

Effective library service management has been shown to be a crucial factor in enhancing students' reading interest. Anderson [24] emphasises the need for librarians to adopt innovative service delivery methods, ranging from strategic book placement to engaging literacy programs and library promotions. Supporting this, Zahra's research finds that well-managed libraries can increase students' reading interest by up to 60% [25], [26], [27].

While many studies focus on urban school libraries or institutional policies, this study fills the gap by investigating librarian service management in a rural public

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elementary school in Indonesia, specifically SDN 22 Panai Hulu. Unlike previous research that primarily emphasises technical service aspects, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of planning, implementation, and evaluation of library services, along with the active involvement of librarians in literacy programs.

Moreover, this study explores how librarian–student interactions contribute to creating a positive and motivating learning environment. By highlighting interpersonal dynamics and the creative roles of librarians in fostering an inspiring reading culture, this research adopts a managerial and humanistic approach that differentiates it from prior studies. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into how tailored service management strategies in rural school libraries can contribute to improving students' reading interest and overall literacy outcomes.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive qualitative approach, which was chosen to gain a deep understanding of library service strategies and student responses in a natural school setting [28], [29]. This approach allows researchers to explore the practices and dynamics of librarian service management at SDN 04 Panai Hulu holistically and contextually.

### Participant Selection

Participants were selected purposively based on three main criteria:

- a. Having direct experience as implementers or users of library services.
- b. Being actively involved in literacy activities or programs conducted by the school library.
- c. Willing to provide information openly and reflectively regarding librarian service management practices.

A total of eight participants were involved in this study, consisting of one principal, one administrative staff member, one active librarian, and five elementary school students from various grade levels who regularly visited the library.

Table 1. Participant Biographies

No	Name (Initials)	Education	Gender	Position	Years of Service	Age
1	EN	S1 – PGSD	Male	Headmaster	22 years	53
2	RW	S1 – Math Education	Female	Administration	16 years	31
3	MS	S1 – PGSD	Female	Librarian	3.5 years	35
4	HI	–	Male	Student	–	12
5	NR	–	Female	Student	–	11
6	NS	–	Female	Student	–	12
7	MS	–	Male	Student	–	12

### Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation, allowing for triangulation and ensuring the credibility of findings. Researchers contacted participants through the school, with coordination from the principal and librarian. Initial communication was carried out using mobile phones and the

WhatsApp messaging application to explain the purpose of the study and arrange interview schedules. Participants were selected based on recommendations from school staff who were familiar with individuals actively involved in library services.

Each interview session lasted 10–15 minutes and was conducted face-to-face at a mutually agreed-upon location. Interviews were designed to capture participants' reflections and experiences regarding librarian services and literacy engagement.

Observations of librarian activities were conducted intensively over several workdays, aligned with library operating hours. Each observation session lasted approximately one hour, with the researcher systematically recording librarian activities every 15 minutes.

Document collection began with formal requests for access submitted to the school administration and library management. Relevant documents were then sorted based on their alignment with the study's focus.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman [30], which consists of three main stages:

1. **Data Condensation** – selecting, simplifying, and categorising relevant data based on the research focus.
2. **Data Display** – organising information into thematic categories such as librarian service strategies, types of literacy activities, and student responses to library programs.
3. **Conclusion Drawing and Verification** – interpreting data patterns and relationships to answer the research questions comprehensively.

To ensure the validity of findings, data triangulation was performed by comparing information from interviews, observations, and documents. This helped to verify the consistency and credibility of the interpretations.

#### Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with full attention to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all adult participants, and consent was secured from both the students and their guardians for student participants. The identities of participants were anonymised using initials to protect their privacy. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, and all data were handled with confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the analysis carried out, the research produced 3 main themes, namely (1) Optimising Library Functions in Increasing Students' Interest in Reading, (2) A Comfortable and Enjoyable Library Environment for Students, (3) Literacy Challenges in the Digital Era and Library Empowerment Solutions.

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### 3.1. Optimising Library Functions to Increase Student Reading Interest

Optimising library functions is crucial for fostering student reading interest, as the library serves as a bridge between students and various sources of information. Principals and administrators emphasise the library's role as a centre for learning and character development, while librarians focus on selecting books based on students' ages, abilities, and interests. Student responses indicate that a diverse and engaging collection of books, including picture books and storybooks, significantly impacts attendance and reading interest. By involving students in book selection and providing appropriate reading materials, the library can become a more engaging space and foster students' love of reading. This is evident in the following interview results.

*"The library acts as a bridge between students and various sources of information... helping them find reading material that suits their interests."* (Principal Interview, July 10, 2025)

The principal stated that the library serves as a bridge connecting students to various sources of information. In this role, the library helps students find reading material that aligns with their interests, thereby increasing overall engagement and interest in reading.

*"The library is the heart and lungs of the school... a place where students hone their skills, expand their knowledge, and cultivate a love of learning."* (Administration Interview, July 11, 2025)

The administration emphasises that the library serves as the heart of the school, playing a vital role in developing students' skills and knowledge. By providing a supportive environment, the library helps foster students' love of learning, making it an essential place in the educational process.

*"I choose books based on their age, reading ability, and interests. I also consult with the students frequently."* (Librarian Interview, July 11, 2025)

The librarian explained that book selection is based on students' age, reading ability, and interests, and involves direct consultation with them. This approach aims to provide a relevant and engaging collection, thereby increasing students' interest in reading and ensuring they find reading materials that suit their preferences.

*"I like books with lots of pictures, especially pictures of animals."* (Student Interview 1, July 14, 2025)

*"The books are always the same, so I rarely go to the library."* (Student Interview 2, July 14, 2025)

*"I like storybooks and fairy tales."* (Student Interview 3, July 14, 2025)

*"I like reading storybooks, sir."* (Student Interview 4, July 14, 2025)

Interviews with students revealed that their reading interest was influenced by the variety and types of books available in the library. Student 1 preferred picture books, particularly about animals, as they appealed to his visual sense. Student 2 complained about the monotony of the available book collection, leading him to visit the library less frequently. Meanwhile, Students 3 and 4 showed an interest in storybooks and fairy tales, indicating that certain genres may be more appealing to students. Overall, the diversity of the book collection was a key factor in increasing students' reading interest.

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Optimisation function libraries are very important in increasing the interest of students. The library plays a role as a bridge between students and various sources of information, helping them find appropriate reading that interests them. The head school and administration emphasise the role of the library as a centre of learning and development character, while librarians focus on selecting books based on age, abilities, and the interests of students.

Interview results with students show that collecting diverse and interesting books, including book pictures and stories, is a very influential factor in visits and interest in reading. By involving students in election books and providing material appropriate for reading, the library can become a better place that is interesting and supportive, which encourages students to read.

Many libraries are now adopting digital technologies, such as e-books and online learning platforms. This aims to attract students who are more familiar with digital media and facilitate access to a variety of information sources [31]. New initiatives such as reading clubs, writing *workshops*, and literacy development programs actively involve students in book selection and discussion. This involvement can foster a sense of ownership in the library's collection. Libraries are beginning to use data analytics to understand student interests and optimise book collections based on their feedback. This approach allows libraries to adapt to user needs [32].

### 3.2. Comfortable and Enjoyable Library Environment for Students

A comfortable and pleasant library environment significantly influences students' reading interest, with the principal emphasising the importance of a design and atmosphere that supports comfortable reading. While administration does not directly address the physical environment, it plays a role in supporting good administration. Librarians focus on maintaining a clean and quiet reading space and organising activities such as story hours and book discussions. Student feedback indicates that they enjoy the library's cleanliness and quiet, with many feeling comfortable reading there, creating a positive collective atmosphere for learning. This is illustrated in the following data.

*"The library's comfortable design and atmosphere encourage students to enjoy reading."* (Principal Interview, July 10, 2025)

The head of school emphasises that the design and atmosphere of a comfortable library are very important to push students to feel at home reading. A pleasant environment can increase the students' reading experience and engagement.

*"Not directly conveying the physical atmosphere, but supporting it through administrative roles."* (Administration Interview, July 11, 2025)

Administration explains that although No discusses the atmosphere, the physical library in a way, directly, they contribute through their administrative support to the management of the library. This shows that aspect administration is also important for creating a conducive environment for students.

*"I organise the reading room with comfortable seating, clean and quiet, and hold story hours or book discussions."* (Librarian Interview, July 11, 2025)

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Librarians explain that they focus on creating a comfortable reading environment with clean and quiet seating. In addition, they also organise activities such as story time and discussion books to increase student involvement in reading.

*"The place is clean, and it is fun... lots of people reading together."* (Student Interview 1, July 14, 2025)

*"I like the atmosphere of the library, sir."* (Student Interview 2, July 14, 2025)

*"I like it, sir, because the library is quiet, there is no noise."* (Student Interview 3, July 14, 2025)

*"No fuss, sir."* (Student Interview 4, July 14, 2025)

Interview results with students show that they value cleanliness and a quiet atmosphere in the library. Student 1 said that the place is clean and fun, and Lots of students read together. Student 2 stated Like with the atmosphere library, while Student 3 and Student 4 emphasised the importance of calmness, indicating that a quiet environment is a very supportive experience. Environment, a comfortable and pleasant library, has a significant impact on interested reading students. The head of school emphasises that design and atmosphere supporting library comfort are very important to push students to feel at home reading. A pleasant environment can increase the students' reading experience and engagement.

Although the administration does not speak directly about the atmosphere physically, they contribute through the role of administrative support, the management library. This shows that aspect administration is also important in creating a conducive environment for students. Librarians, on the other hand, focus on organising a clean and quiet reading area. They also organise activities such as story time and discussion books, which aim to increase student involvement in reading. Student responses show that they really appreciate the cleanliness and tranquillity of the library. Many students feel comfortable reading there, which creates a positive collective atmosphere for studying.

Modern libraries now place greater emphasis on space design that is responsive to student needs. This includes the use of comfortable and flexible furniture and customizable reading areas. The role of administration in supporting library management is increasingly recognised [33]. Good administration contributes to the comfort and efficiency of library space management. There is a growing awareness of the importance of student well-being in creating an optimal learning environment. Libraries are now increasingly geared towards becoming places that support not only learning but also student mental well-being [34].

### **3.3. Literacy Challenges in the Digital Era and Library Empowerment Solutions**

Challenges to literacy in the digital age include limited budgets, limited human resources, and the lack of digital libraries, as articulated by the principal. While the administration did not directly address technology, librarians noted that limited reading time, the influence of social media, and limited access to appropriate books were significant issues. Interviews with students revealed a limited variety of books and activities in the library, which can diminish their interest in reading. To address these challenges, empowering the library through collection development, organising literacy

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activities, and integrating technology are important solutions to increase students' interest in reading and literacy. These data can be seen in the following interview results.

*"The main challenges include a lack of budget, human resources, and the absence of a digital library."* (Principal Interview, July 10, 2025)

The head of the school identified the main problems faced by libraries, namely, a lack of budget, limitations of human beings, and the digital library. Challenges: This can hinder the optimal development and utilisation of the library in support of literacy students.

*"Lack of reading time, the influence of social media, and access to appropriate books."* (Librarian Interview, July 11, 2025)

Librarians disclose a number of challenges faced by students, including a lack of time for reading, the influence of social media that diverts attention, and limited access to appropriate books of interest. Factors that can reduce the motivation of students for reading and exploring literature.

The challenge of literacy in the digital era is increasingly complex, encompassing a number of influencing factors that interest reading students. The head of school identifies the main issues faced by libraries, such as a lack of budget, limitations on human resources, and unavailability of digital libraries. Third factor: This can hinder the development and optimisation of the library in support of literacy students. The librarian also highlighted a number of problems faced by students, including a lack of time for reading, the influence of social media that diverts attention, and limited access to appropriate books of interest. Inability to access material that is relevant and interesting can reduce the motivation of students to read and explore literature.

Organise engaging and interactive literacy activities, including digital literacy events. These activities can engage students and increase their interest in reading. Build partnerships with local organisations, other schools, and digital libraries to expand access to resources and enhance literacy programs. Teach students the digital literacy skills necessary to navigate information in the digital age effectively. This includes the ability to evaluate information sources and use technology wisely [35].

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that effective librarian service management plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' reading interest at SDN 22 Panai Hulu. Through optimising library functions, creating a comfortable and engaging reading environment, and addressing the unique literacy challenges of the digital era, librarians significantly influence students' motivation to read. Their proactive efforts—such as curating relevant and age-appropriate reading materials and organising literacy-centred programs—create a positive and supportive reading culture within the school. To sustain and further develop this momentum, rural schools need to invest in librarian training, establish flexible literacy programs, and incorporate digital resources that align with students' evolving needs. These practical steps can help rural libraries remain relevant and impactful in a technology-driven educational landscape. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single rural school setting. Future research is encouraged to undertake comparative studies between rural and urban school libraries or to explore the effectiveness of specific digital literacy

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interventions. Such studies would provide broader insights into how school libraries can be strategically managed to support literacy development across diverse educational contexts..

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