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Teachers' Roles in Developing Third-Grade Students' Reading Habits Through a Deep Learning Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the role of teachers in fostering reading habits among third-grade elementary school students through the implementation of a deep learning approach. The research was conducted at SDN Tegalsawah II, Karawang Timur, Indonesia, over one academic semester using a descriptive qualitative design. The participants consisted of classroom teacher informants selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in literacy instruction and at least two years of teaching experience, while third-grade students served as supporting participants through classroom observations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings indicate that teachers play important roles as facilitators, motivators, and learning guides in creating a literacy-supportive classroom environment. Their strategies include establishing daily reading routines before lessons, providing engaging reading materials, utilizing classroom reading corners, and motivating students through encouragement and positive reinforcement. Classroom observations and teacher interviews suggest that implementing the deep learning approach was associated with students demonstrating deeper engagement in reading activities, including efforts to interpret texts, participate in discussions, and relate reading content to everyday experiences. Nevertheless, students' reading habits varied, with some showing independent reading behaviors while others continued to require teacher guidance and motivation. Supporting factors included strong teacher commitment and the availability of reading resources, whereas limited student interest in reading and an insufficient book collection remained major challenges. Overall, the findings suggest that consistent teacher involvement, appropriate literacy strategies, and the sustained implementation of deep learning principles contribute to the development of reading habits in elementary school students. However, further studies involving broader participant groups are needed to strengthen these findings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Elementary education serves as the primary foundation for developing students' character, intelligence, and skills. In today's rapidly changing world, education emphasizes not only mastery of subject matter but also the development of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills [1]. Therefore, learning processes in elementary schools need to be continuously improved to meet global demands while preparing a generation capable of adapting to various changes. One approach suitable for addressing these needs is deep learning, a learning method that emphasizes in-depth understanding, connections among concepts, and active student participation throughout the learning process. On the other hand, reading ability is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in supporting academic success in elementary schools, as it serves as the basis for understanding various fields of knowledge and other essential skills [2]. Strong reading skills help students comprehend information, enhance their thinking abilities, and foster independent knowledge acquisition from an early age [3].

At the elementary school level, developing reading habits is a highly critical stage because habits formed early in life tend to persist and influence students' learning attitudes and behaviors at subsequent educational levels [4]. However, reading habits among Indonesian elementary school students remain relatively low and have not yet become an integral part of their daily learning culture [5]. Reading activities are often carried out merely to fulfill academic requirements, such as completing assignments or preparing for examinations, rather than as a meaningful learning necessity [6].

In this context, teachers play a vital role in fostering a reading culture among elementary school students. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering instructional content but also serve as mentors and motivators, creating learning environments that support the development of students' reading literacy skills [7]. Through effective lesson planning, appropriate selection of reading materials, and the implementation of suitable instructional strategies, teachers can encourage students' active and sustained engagement in reading activities [8].

Along with the evolution of 21st-century educational paradigms, learning is expected to move beyond rote memorization and focus on deep and meaningful understanding [9]. One instructional approach that aligns with this expectation is the *deep learning* approach. This approach emphasizes profound conceptual understanding, critical thinking, reflection, and the connection of knowledge to real-life contexts [10].

In reading instruction, the *deep learning* approach encourages students not only to recognize words and sentences but also to comprehend texts, interpret information, and connect reading content with their prior knowledge and experiences (Hattie, 2012). Reading instruction oriented toward *deep learning* enables students to actively engage in understanding texts through discussions, reflection, and higher-order thinking activities grounded in the text [11].

The implementation of the *deep learning* approach in developing reading habits requires teachers to design learning activities that are meaningful, contextual, and cognitively challenging [12]. However, in practice, teachers still face various challenges,

such as limited instructional time, differences in students' reading abilities, and insufficient understanding of *deep learning*-based reading instruction strategies [13]

Although numerous studies have examined reading habits and literacy in elementary schools, research specifically analyzing the role of teachers in developing reading habits through the *deep learning* approach remains limited [14]. Most studies focus on school literacy programs or efforts to increase students' interest in reading without thoroughly investigating how teachers design, implement, and reflect upon reading instruction aimed at fostering deep understanding. Furthermore, studies that comprehensively integrate teachers' roles, reading habits, and the *deep learning* approach, particularly through qualitative research methods, are still relatively scarce [15].

Based on these research gaps, this study aims to analyze the role of teachers in developing elementary school students' reading habits through the *deep learning* approach. This study is expected to make theoretical contributions to the advancement of reading literacy research and to provide practical guidance for teachers and schools in designing reading instruction that is more meaningful and oriented toward deep understanding.

2. METHOD

Research Type and Approach

This study employed a single-case qualitative design to examine teachers' roles in fostering reading habits among third-grade elementary school students by incorporating deep learning principles into classroom literacy activities. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the research focused on an in-depth investigation of literacy practices within a single educational setting rather than seeking statistical generalization [16].

The unit of analysis was the implementation of teachers' literacy practices in developing students' reading habits, particularly the integration of classroom reading routines with elements of the deep learning approach, including contextual discussion, reflective questioning, and text-to-life connections.

Research Setting and Duration

The study was conducted at SDN Tegalsawah II, Karawang Timur, West Java, Indonesia, because the school had implemented a structured literacy program that included daily pre-lesson reading activities, classroom reading corners, and teacher-led literacy instruction. These characteristics made the school an appropriate setting for examining how teachers integrated literacy activities with deep learning-oriented instructional practices.

Research Subjects and Informants

The subjects of this study were elementary school teachers who were directly involved in reading instruction and the implementation of literacy programs at the school. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the following criteria: (1) serving as classroom teachers in elementary school, (2) having at least two years of teaching experience, and (3) actively participating in reading and literacy activities within the classroom. In addition, students and instructional documents were utilized as supporting sources of data in this study.

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Participants and Informants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to obtain information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives. The primary participant was the third-grade classroom teacher responsible for implementing literacy instruction and classroom reading activities. The teacher met the following criteria:

1. Served as the third-grade classroom teacher;
2. Had at least two years of teaching experience;
3. Actively implemented literacy activities and reading instruction in the classroom.

Third-grade students participated as observed participants during classroom literacy activities, but were not the primary interview informants. Their classroom interactions and responses to literacy instruction served as supporting observational data. School documents, including lesson plans and literacy program records, were also used to strengthen data triangulation.

Participant Profile

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant Code	Role	Grade	Data Source	Observation
T1	Third-grade classroom teacher	Grade III	Interview, Documentation	Observation, Yes

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through the following techniques:

1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to gather information on their roles, reading instruction strategies, the implementation of the deep learning approach, and the challenges encountered in developing students' reading habits.

2. Observation

Observations were conducted to examine classroom implementation of reading instruction directly, students' literacy activities, and teacher-student interactions throughout the learning process.

3. Documentation

Documentation involved collecting and analyzing supporting materials, including lesson plans, instructional materials, students' reading journals, and school literacy program documents.

Research Instruments

The researcher served as the primary human instrument in this study. To support data collection, the researcher used observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation formats developed in accordance with the research objectives.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman [17]. Analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process through four interconnected stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This study employed qualitative data analysis using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman. This model was selected because it enables researchers to process data systematically and continuously from the data collection stage to the conclusion-drawing process. The analysis was conducted in several stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These stages were carried out interactively to obtain a deeper understanding of teachers' roles in developing elementary school students' reading habits through the *deep learning* approach.

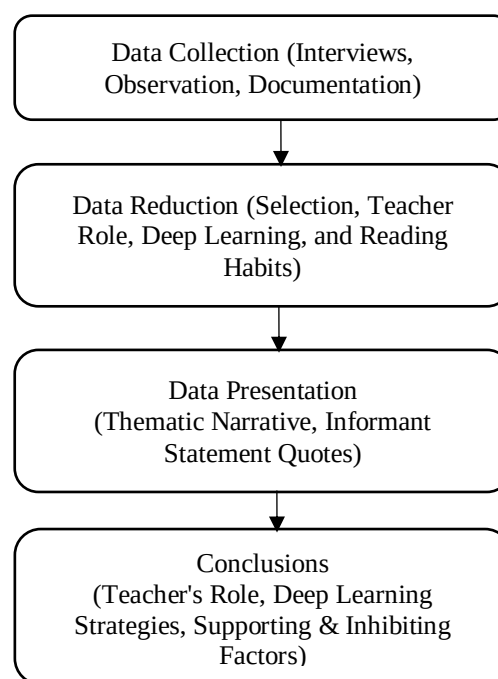


Figure 1. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis phase began with information collection through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. The collected data were then selected and simplified by grouping, coding, and selecting information relevant to the research focus, particularly regarding the role of teachers, reading instructional strategies, and the implementation of the deep learning approach. The data were then organized into thematic descriptions and category matrices to facilitate the researcher's identification of patterns and relationships between categories. The next stage involved drawing and testing conclusions, which was carried out repeatedly through cross-checking the data and analysis results to achieve accurate, valid, and consistent research findings.

During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were coded and organized according to the research focus. Codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories concerning teacher roles, literacy practices, implementation of deep learning elements, supporting factors, and implementation

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challenges. These categories were then synthesized into thematic descriptions presented in the Results section. Thus, thematic categorization represented the outcome of the coding process conducted within the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis framework rather than a separate analytical method.

Data displays were developed using thematic matrices and narrative summaries to facilitate comparisons across multiple data sources. Conclusions were continuously refined through repeated examination of emerging patterns and cross-validation across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence until coherent interpretations emerged.

Data Validity

Data validity in this study was maintained through the application of triangulation techniques, both source and technical triangulation. Furthermore, the researcher conducted member checks by requesting confirmation from informants regarding the research findings to ensure the data obtained were appropriate and accurate. Research consistency was also maintained through careful observation and systematic and continuous data recording [18].

Trustworthiness

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source and methodological triangulation, achieved by comparing evidence from interviews, classroom observations, and documentary analysis. Member checking was conducted by asking the teacher participant to review the interpretation of interview findings. Dependability was supported through systematic documentation of research procedures, continuous field-note recording, and an audit trail of analytical decisions. Confirmability was enhanced by maintaining consistency between the collected evidence and the reported interpretations, while transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and literacy practices at SDN Tegalsawah II.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Research Location

This study was conducted at SDN Tegalsawah II, Karawang Timur, where a school literacy program had been integrated into daily classroom activities. Classroom observations indicated that literacy practices were supported by the availability of a classroom reading corner, reading materials, and scheduled reading sessions before formal instruction. Document analysis of the school's literacy program and lesson plans confirmed that daily reading activities formed part of the school's literacy policy and classroom routines.



Figure 2. Research Location, SDN Tegalsawah II
Source: Researcher Documentation (2026)

Furthermore, the school has implemented reading activities before the start of lessons as part of its literacy program. This activity aligns with the School Literacy Movement's emphasis on cultivating a continuous reading habit [19]. This habit is the first step in building a reading culture in students from an early age, as [20] argues, noting that reading habits must be instilled through consistent practice in the school environment.

Teacher Roles in Developing Reading Habits

Analysis of interview, observation, and documentary data indicates that the classroom teacher assumed multiple roles in fostering students' reading habits, including serving as a facilitator, motivator, and learning guide. During interviews, the teacher explained that developing reading habits required creating a classroom environment in which students felt comfortable engaging with books rather than simply completing reading assignments [21]. These perceptions were consistent with classroom observations. During literacy sessions, the teacher actively guided students in selecting reading materials, monitored individual reading activities, and encouraged students to discuss the content after reading. Lesson plans also demonstrated that literacy activities were incorporated into regular classroom instruction rather than implemented as separate programs [22].

Reading Habituation Strategies

The findings show that reading habituation was implemented primarily through structured reading routines before the beginning of daily lessons. According to interview data, students were encouraged to read independently before classroom instruction commenced, while the teacher provided guidance and positive reinforcement throughout the activity. Observational data indicated that students generally participated in the scheduled reading sessions, particularly when attractive reading materials were available through the classroom reading corner. The teacher also provided praise and encouragement to students who actively

participated in reading activities [23]. Document analysis of classroom literacy schedules confirmed that these reading routines were implemented regularly.

However, the available evidence suggests that these practices established regular participation in literacy activities rather than demonstrating that independent reading habits had been fully developed [24].

Implementation of Deep Learning in Reading Activities

The findings suggest that the teacher incorporated several instructional elements associated with the deep learning approach during literacy instruction. Rather than asking students only to read texts, the teacher encouraged classroom discussions, posed reflective questions, and invited students to connect the threaded content to their own experiences [25].

Classroom observations showed that some students were able to explain the main ideas of a text using their own words after guided discussion, while several students attempted to connect story events with situations encountered in their daily lives. These activities provided initial evidence of contextual and reflective comprehension rather than simple text recall.

Nevertheless, observational evidence also indicated variation in students' responses. Some students actively participated in discussions, whereas others provided only brief answers or required additional prompting before responding. Therefore, the findings indicate that elements of the deep learning approach were incorporated into classroom practice, although the extent of implementation varied across students and learning activities.

Variation in Students' Reading Habits

The findings demonstrate considerable variation in students' reading habits. Interview data indicated that while some students voluntarily selected reading materials and actively participated in literacy sessions, others engaged in reading primarily after receiving teacher encouragement [26].

Classroom observations supported these findings. Some students maintained their attention throughout reading activities and participated in subsequent discussions, whereas others displayed shorter periods of engagement and relied on teacher guidance to complete the activity. These observations suggest that although routine literacy participation had become part of classroom practice, independent reading habits had not yet developed equally among all students.

Within the scope of classroom observations, greater participation during literacy sessions was reflected in indicators such as students voluntarily selecting books, more active participation in discussions, and requiring less teacher prompting during reading activities. However, the study did not include objective measures of reading frequency or long-term reading behavior; therefore, these observations should be interpreted as indicators of classroom engagement rather than definitive evidence of sustained reading habits [27].

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The implementation of literacy activities was influenced by both supporting and inhibiting factors. Interview data identified teacher commitment, school support, and the availability

of classroom reading materials as important factors facilitating literacy activities. These findings were supported by classroom observations showing consistent teacher involvement during reading sessions and the regular use of the classroom reading corner.

At the same time, several challenges were identified. Students demonstrated differing levels of reading ability and participation, with some requiring continuous encouragement before engaging in reading activities. The limited variety of available books also reduced opportunities to match reading materials with students' interests and reading levels. These findings suggest that the availability of a reading corner alone does not ensure effective literacy engagement; the quality, diversity, and accessibility of reading materials remain important considerations for sustaining students' participation in classroom literacy activities.

3.1 Results

The results of this study were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, which were then analyzed thematically according to the research focus: the role of teachers, reading instructional strategies, and the application of a deep learning approach in developing students' reading habits.

Based on the interviews, teachers play a crucial role in developing students' reading habits. Teachers function not only as transmitters of material but also as key drivers in creating a learning environment that supports literacy activities. This was emphasized by an informant who stated that *"the role of teachers is very important as the main drivers in instilling reading habits from an early age."* In addition, the teacher also added that *"teachers do not only deliver material, but also guide and create a supportive environment so that students are more comfortable reading."*



Figure 3. Interview Activity with Class Teacher
Source: Researcher Documentation (2026)

In practice, teachers design lessons tailored to students' abilities and use engaging media. This is evident in the teacher's statement, *"I design lessons tailored to students' ability levels and use engaging media."* Based on observations, the teacher actively guides students while reading, provides direction, and engages in question-and-answer interactions, ensuring interactive learning.

Efforts to build a reading habit are carried out by encouraging reading activities before the lesson begins. The teacher stated that *"making reading a habit before the lesson begins is one way to instill reading habits in students."* Furthermore, the teacher provides engaging reading materials, uses reading corners, and motivates students who actively read with praise or awards. Observations show that students tend to be more enthusiastic when reading activities are supported by engaging reading materials.

In implementing the deep learning approach, the teacher emphasizes not only reading activities but also understanding the content. The teacher stated that *"with the deep learning approach, students can think critically and reflectively, and connect reading to everyday life."* This was evident in discussions, Q&A sessions, and efforts to connect the reading content to students' experiences. Observations revealed that some students were able to re-explain reading content in their own words, although this was not uniform.

Students' reading habits still showed variation. A teacher stated that *"students' reading habits still vary; some already have a fairly good interest in reading,"* and *"some students have begun reading on their own, but many still read due to encouragement from teachers."* However, after the literacy activities were implemented routinely, an increase in students' reading interest was observed.

In its implementation, there were both supporting and inhibiting factors. The teacher explained that *"the availability of interesting books and support from teachers and the school are supporting factors,"* but obstacles remained, such as low reading interest among some students and a limited book collection.

3.2 Discussion

The findings indicate that teachers play a central role in establishing reading habits by creating classroom environments that encourage regular literacy activities. Beyond delivering instructional content, teachers served as facilitators, motivators, and learning guides, organizing reading routines and providing opportunities for students to engage with texts. These findings support previous studies that emphasize the role of teachers in fostering literacy cultures in elementary schools [28]. More importantly, the present findings suggest that teachers' contributions extend beyond instructional delivery to shaping classroom practices that make reading a regular component of students' daily learning experiences.

One important finding is the distinction between reading habituation and independent reading habits. The routine of reading before lessons appeared to promote consistent participation in literacy activities, in line with the principles of the School Literacy Movement (Kemendikbud, 2019). However, regular participation should not be interpreted as evidence that independent reading habits have been fully established. Classroom observations indicated that while some students voluntarily engaged in reading, many continued to depend on teacher encouragement. This suggests that the literacy program successfully promoted behavioral consistency but had not yet fully fostered intrinsic motivation for independent reading. As noted by [29], developing sustainable reading habits requires continuous practice and gradual internalization, rather than relying solely on routine participation.



The findings also indicate that teachers used positive reinforcement, including praise and rewards, to encourage students to participate in reading activities. Such strategies may increase students' willingness to participate during classroom literacy sessions, particularly among learners who are still developing reading confidence. Nevertheless, relying solely on external reinforcement may not be sufficient to cultivate long-term independent reading habits. Sustained reading motivation is more likely to emerge when students perceive reading as personally meaningful rather than as an activity performed primarily to obtain teacher approval or rewards. Therefore, motivational strategies should gradually shift from external encouragement toward supporting students' autonomy and personal engagement with reading.

Regarding the deep learning approach, the findings suggest that teachers incorporated several instructional elements associated with it rather than implementing it comprehensively. Classroom activities included contextual discussions, reflective questioning, and opportunities for students to relate reading content to their own experiences. These practices are consistent with the characteristics of deep learning described by [25], which emphasize meaning-making, reflection, and conceptual understanding. However, routine reading activities alone should not be interpreted as evidence of deep learning. Deep learning occurs when students actively interpret, question, evaluate, and connect textual information with prior knowledge and authentic situations. Within this study, classroom observations provided initial evidence that some students engaged in reflective, context-based comprehension activities, but did not demonstrate that all dimensions of deep learning were consistently implemented.

The relationship between deep learning and reading habits should therefore be interpreted cautiously. Rather than directly improving reading habits, incorporating contextual discussion and reflection may have made reading activities more meaningful for students. When learners are encouraged to connect texts with their experiences and discuss ideas critically, reading may become a more engaging learning activity than simple decoding or memorization. Although this interpretation is consistent with existing theories of deep learning, the present qualitative evidence is insufficient to conclude that the approach independently increased reading motivation or higher-order thinking skills.

Student differences observed during the study also warrant further consideration. Variation in reading habits may reflect differences not only in teacher encouragement but also in individual and environmental factors that were beyond the scope of this study. Reading ability, vocabulary knowledge, confidence, prior literacy experiences, access to books at home, family literacy practices, and the suitability of the reading materials may all influence students' willingness and ability to engage in independent reading. These factors suggest that developing reading habits requires collaboration between classroom instruction, school support, and the broader home literacy environment.

Similarly, although classroom reading corners increased literacy activities, the findings indicate that access alone does not guarantee effective reading engagement. The variety, relevance, reading level, accessibility, and regular rotation of available books likely influence the educational value of reading corners. Consequently, improving literacy

environments requires attention not only to physical facilities but also to the quality and appropriateness of reading resources provided for students.

Overall, this study contributes contextual evidence demonstrating how elementary school teachers combine routine literacy practices with selected elements of the deep learning approach to support reading development. Rather than proposing a new theoretical framework, the findings offer a practical understanding of how contextual discussion, reflective questioning, and meaningful classroom interactions can complement routine literacy activities to encourage students' engagement with reading. At the same time, the findings highlight that establishing regular reading routines represents an important initial stage, whereas developing independent reading habits remains a gradual process that requires sustained instructional support and opportunities for meaningful reading experiences.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research was conducted in a single elementary school, limiting the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the number of teacher informants was limited, and the analysis relied primarily on teacher perspectives, with no systematic interviews of students. Third, the observation period covered only one academic semester and therefore could not capture the long-term development of students' reading habits. Fourth, the study did not employ objective measures of reading frequency or standardized assessments of reading motivation and comprehension, instead relying on qualitative observations and participants' perspectives. Finally, as in other qualitative studies, data interpretation may have been influenced by the researcher's subjectivity, despite the use of triangulation and member checking procedures. Future studies involving multiple schools, diverse participant groups, longer observation periods, and mixed-method designs would provide stronger evidence on the development of reading habits and the contribution of deep-learning-oriented literacy instruction.

4. CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study found that teachers play a central role in fostering reading habits among third-grade elementary school students by serving as facilitators, motivators, and learning guides, creating classroom environments that support literacy activities. Teachers established regular reading routines through activities such as reading before lessons, providing accessible reading materials, utilizing classroom reading corners, and encouraging students through positive reinforcement.

The findings also indicate that teachers incorporated several elements of the deep learning approach, particularly through contextual discussions, reflective questioning, and encouraging students to relate reading content to their everyday experiences. These instructional practices were intended to promote deeper engagement with texts rather than focusing solely on reading fluency. However, the study does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that all dimensions of the deep learning approach were fully implemented across classroom practices.

Although regular reading routines had been established, independent reading habits had not developed equally among all students. Some students demonstrated greater initiative to read independently, whereas others continued to rely on teacher encouragement and guidance. The findings suggest that the implemented literacy strategies were associated with greater student participation and enthusiasm during observed reading activities, although they cannot be interpreted as evidence of proven effectiveness.

The development of students' reading habits was influenced by supporting factors, including teacher commitment and the availability of reading materials, while limited book collections and varying levels of student interest remained important challenges. Because this study was conducted in a single elementary school using a descriptive qualitative approach, the findings should be interpreted within their specific educational context and are not intended for broad generalization. Nevertheless, the study highlights the importance of sustained teacher involvement and contextually meaningful literacy instruction in supporting the gradual development of reading habits among elementary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the researcher offers the following recommendations: Teachers are expected to continue developing their creativity in designing engaging and innovative reading lessons, and further to optimize the implementation of a deep learning approach so that students not only read but also understand and critique the content in depth. Schools are expected to increase support for literacy activities, particularly by providing more varied facilities and reading materials tailored to students' needs, thereby increasing students' interest in reading more evenly. Students are expected to increase their awareness of reading as a learning necessity, not just an obligation, so that reading habits can develop independently and sustainably. Future researchers are expected to expand this research with a broader scope, both in terms of the number of subjects and research approaches, to obtain more comprehensive results regarding students' reading habits.

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