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Analysis of Reading Difficulties in Indonesian Language Learning Among Year 3 Pupils at SDN Saruni 4

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ABSTRACT

The present study discusses the reading fluency difficulties of second-grade students at SDN Saruni 4 and identifies the factors underlying their reading ability. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews with second-grade Indonesian language teachers and documentation of student learning outcomes. The results reveal that most students had achieved reading fluency but still experienced difficulties in pronunciation, intonation, and reading comprehension. Factors that influence reading fluency include internal factors, such as students' psychological conditions and motivation to learn, and external factors, such as parental support, family environment, and teachers' instructional methods. Efforts by teachers to overcome these problems include establishing reading literacy activities as a habit before learning begins, providing continuous motivation and support, and implementing varied, effective learning methods and strategies to improve students' reading abilities.

Keywords*: *reading difficulties, indonesian, students

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate and systematic process aimed at fostering learners' potential in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Government of Indonesia, 2003). In the context of primary education, reading literacy is widely recognized as a foundational skill that underpins overall academic achievement and lifelong learning (Rohman et al., 2022; Snow & Matthews, 2016). The Indonesian language curriculum for lower primary grades emphasizes the mastery of four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, reading holds a central position, as it enables students to access and understand new knowledge across subjects (Septiana Soleha et al., 2021).

Despite its importance, empirical data reveal that reading difficulties among Indonesian primary students remain pervasive. International large-scale assessments such as PISA and PIRLS consistently report that Indonesian students' reading proficiency is below the global average (OECD, 2019). For example, PISA 2018 data indicate that over 70% of Indonesian 15-year-olds perform below the minimum proficiency level in reading (OECD, 2019). National studies further corroborate these findings, revealing that many early-grade students still struggle with decoding words, distinguishing letter cases, and comprehending texts, ultimately hampering their ability to follow subsequent lessons (Zahra et al., 2021; Rohman et al., 2022).

Research has highlighted that early reading difficulties are not solely related to linguistic factors but are also shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external influences. Internal factors include students' cognitive abilities, motivation, psychological readiness, and self-confidence (Rohman et al., 2022; van Bergen et al., 2022). External factors encompass parental support, the home literacy environment, and teachers' instructional strategies (Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Kim, 2020). Theoretical models such as the

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Simple View of Reading posit that reading comprehension is a product of both decoding and linguistic comprehension skills (Snow & Matthews, 2016).

Previous research in Indonesia has generally documented the prevalence of reading difficulties in the early grades and examined several associated factors (Oktadiana, 2019; Pratiwi, 2020; Rahma, 2021). However, most existing studies have not provided a comprehensive, integrated analysis of how internal and external factors interact in shaping students' reading fluency within specific local contexts. Furthermore, few studies have used a structured framework, such as SWOT analysis, to formulate contextually relevant interventions.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by providing an in-depth qualitative analysis of reading difficulties among Year 3 students at SDN Saruni 4, integrating internal and external factors, and employing a SWOT analysis to identify practical, context-sensitive solutions. The research novelty lies in its holistic approach, its empirical focus on a rural primary school setting, and its application of SWOT analysis to literacy intervention planning. It is expected that the findings will not only enrich the literature on early literacy in Indonesia but also inform policymakers and practitioners in the design of more effective literacy interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations and Importance of Early Reading

Early reading is widely acknowledged as a foundational skill for academic achievement and lifelong learning (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Snow & Matthews, 2016). The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990) and Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001) emphasize the interplay of decoding and language comprehension in reading proficiency. International research confirms that mastery of early reading skills, such as phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and vocabulary, strongly predicts later reading outcomes (Cain & Oakhill, 2017; Suggate, 2016; Piasta & Wagner, 2010; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Catts et al., 2017). In the Indonesian context, studies highlight the critical role of early reading in facilitating students' access to the broader curriculum (Rohman et al., 2022; Septiana Soleha et al., 2021; Zahra et al., 2021). While the global literature stresses multidimensional approaches, national studies have tended to focus on basic decoding and word recognition.

Patterns and Challenges of Reading Difficulties in Primary Pupils

Reading difficulties among primary school pupils are complex and multifaceted, encompassing deficits in phonological processing, decoding, fluency, and comprehension (Catts et al., 2017; Suggate, 2016; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005; Kim, 2020; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; van Bergen et al., 2022). Large-scale international studies, such as PIRLS and PISA, consistently find that children in numerous countries including Indonesia struggle with fluency and comprehension (Mullis et al., 2017; OECD, 2019). National studies echo these patterns, revealing common issues such as slow reading, frequent errors, and difficulty answering comprehension questions (Oktadiana, 2019; Pratiwi, 2020; Rahma, 2021). However, while international research often explores cognitive, linguistic, and environmental contributors in depth, Indonesian research has largely remained descriptive and less integrative.

Internal and External Factors Influencing Reading Outcomes

Research reveals that reading development is shaped by the dynamic interplay of internal and external factors (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; van Bergen et al., 2022; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014; Scarborough, 2001; Snow & Matthews, 2016). Internal factors include cognitive abilities, motivation, self-efficacy, and psychological readiness (Cain & Oakhill, 2017; Kim, 2020; Rohman et al., 2022). External factors encompass parental involvement, home literacy environment, teacher quality, and classroom resources (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014; Piasta et al., 2012; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; van Bergen et al., 2022). Indonesian studies frequently report that lack of parental support, limited access to reading materials, and

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traditional teaching methods are key obstacles (Aulia et al., 2020; Rohman et al., 2022; Zahra et al., 2021). Compared to global research, which increasingly emphasizes interactive and digital literacy environments, Indonesian schools often still rely on rote learning and face resource constraints. A comparison of the most frequently cited internal and external factors contributing to reading difficulties, as synthesized from both international and national studies, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Internal and External Factors Contributing to Reading Difficulties in Primary School Pupils (Synthesized from National and International Studies)

No	Internal Factors	International References	National References	External Factors	International References	National References
1	Cognitive abilities (memory, attention, processing)	Lonigan & Phillips (2016); Catts et al. (2017)	Rohman et al. (2022)	Parental/family support	Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022); van Bergen et al. (2022)	Rohman et al. (2022); Zahra et al. (2021)
2	Motivation and interest in reading	Cain & Oakhill (2017); Snow & Matthews (2016)	Rohman et al. (2022); Zahra et al. (2021)	Home literacy environment (availability of books, literacy activities)	Sénéchal & LeFevre (2014); Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022)	Aulia et al. (2020)
3	Phonological and language development	Scarborough (2001); Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022)	Rahma (2021); Pratiwi (2020)	Teacher quality and teaching strategies	Piasta et al. (2012); Kim (2020)	Pratiwi (2020); Aulia et al. (2020)
4	Self-confidence and psychological readiness	Suggate (2016); Kim (2020)	Rohman et al. (2022)	School/classroom resources (facilities, class size)	Mullis et al. (2017); OECD (2019)	Oktadiana (2019)
5	Health status, fatigue, neuropsychological aspects	van Bergen et al. (2022)	–	Socioeconomic/cultural context, community literacy culture	Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022); Scarborough (2001)	Septiana Soleha et al. (2021)

Table 1 illustrates that both international and Indonesian research consistently identify cognitive abilities, motivation, and phonological development as the most influential internal factors contributing to reading difficulties. Externally, parental support, the home literacy environment, and teacher quality are emphasized across contexts. However, studies in Indonesia often highlight additional challenges, including limited classroom resources and traditional teaching methods. This comprehensive comparison underscores the need for multi-faceted interventions that address both individual and systemic factors in early literacy development.

Interventions and Strategies to Address Reading Difficulties

Evidence from meta-analyses and intervention studies globally supports the effectiveness of systematic phonics, phonological awareness training, and language enrichment programs in improving early literacy outcomes (Suggate, 2016; Piasta & Wagner, 2010; National Reading Panel, 2000; Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Kim, 2020; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). Technology-assisted and parent-involved interventions have shown significant promise in enhancing reading motivation and achievement (Piasta et al., 2012; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). In Indonesia, interventions have included literacy-rich classroom environments, read-aloud sessions, and teacher professional development (Aulia et al., 2020; Rahma, 2021; Septiana Soleha et al., 2021). However, the adoption of evidence-based, contextually relevant strategies—such as integrating digital media and parental engagement—remains limited relative to international best practices.

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Research Gaps and Implications for the Indonesian Context

While international research has evolved toward holistic and ecological approaches to early literacy (Scarborough, 2001; Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Suggate, 2016), most Indonesian studies still focus on surface-level descriptions of reading problems. There is a paucity of integrated studies that analyze the interplay of multiple factors and systematically evaluate intervention effectiveness in local contexts. This study seeks to address these research gaps by synthesizing theoretical models and empirical findings from both international and national literature and by applying them to the case of SDN Saruni 4. By comparing and integrating global and local evidence, this research aims to provide context-sensitive recommendations for improving early reading outcomes in Indonesian primary schools.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the reading difficulties experienced by Year 3 pupils at SDN Saruni 4. The qualitative descriptive approach was selected to enable the researcher to capture the complexity and context of literacy learning as it occurs naturally in the school setting and to uncover both observable and underlying factors affecting students' reading fluency (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). This methodological choice is widely recognized as suitable for educational research, particularly for investigating processes, perceptions, and contextual influences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on 24 Year 3 students (12 males and 12 females) and two Indonesian language teachers at SDN Saruni 4. The inclusion criteria for student participants were: (1) enrolled in Year 3, (2) attending regular classes during the data collection period, and (3) willing to participate with parental consent. Teacher participants were selected for their direct involvement in Year 3 reading instruction. Demographic data, including age, gender, and parental background, were collected to provide contextual understanding of the sample (Patton, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data collection utilized three main techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, (2) classroom observations, and (3) documentation analysis of students' reading portfolios and assessment records (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim, 2020; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Patton, 2015). The interview protocol was developed based on literature and expert consultation, covering themes such as reading habits, motivational factors, parental support, and perceived challenges. Interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and were audio-recorded with participant consent. Classroom observations were conducted over four weeks, focusing on indicators such as student engagement, instructional strategies, and peer interactions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Field notes and observation checklists were used to ensure systematic data capture. Documentation analysis provides objective triangulation of reading achievement and progress.

Thematic data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019) framework: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Coding was performed both deductively (using codes derived from literature and research questions) and inductively (allowing themes to emerge from the data). Categories included types of reading difficulties, internal/external factors, and effective intervention strategies. Analysis involved constant comparison and peer debriefing to ensure interpretive validity (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017). Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were triangulated to strengthen credibility.

To maintain rigor and trustworthiness, multiple strategies were employed: (1) triangulation of data sources and methods, (2) member checking by sharing summaries with participants for validation, (3) peer debriefing with academic colleagues, and (4) maintaining an audit trail of decisions throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical considerations were rigorously observed. Approval was obtained from the school principal and the university ethics committee. Written informed consent was secured from all teacher participants and from parents/guardians of student participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by assigning

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pseudonyms to all individuals and securely storing data in password-protected files (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This methodological approach is aligned with best practices in international educational research on literacy and reading difficulties (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Kim, 2020; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Miles et al., 2019; Nowell et al., 2017; Yin, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data collection was carried out using two main techniques: semi-structured interviews with Year 3 teachers and documentation of pupils' learning outcomes, such as reading progress records and portfolios of written assignments (Pratiwi, 2020; Kim, 2020). Semi-structured interviews were selected to obtain rich, in-depth data, allowing informants the freedom to express their views whilst remaining focused on the research objectives. Documentation of learning outcomes was used to corroborate interview data and provide an objective picture of pupils' reading development.

Data analysis was conducted systematically in three stages, according to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019): data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The data reduction process involved sorting and grouping relevant data in line with the research focus, whilst data presentation was carried out through descriptive narratives and comparative tables. Conclusions were drawn based on emerging patterns in the findings and verified through triangulation of data sources, namely by comparing interview results with documentation. Data validity is maintained through member checking and triangulation techniques, as recommended in contemporary qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022).

To strengthen the methodological foundation and highlight the rigor of this study, Table 2 compares the research methods used in several relevant national and international studies on primary school reading literacy.

Table 2. Comparison of Research Methods in Studies Related to Primary School Reading Literacy

Researchers & Years	Approaches & Methods	Research Subjects	Data Collection Techniques	Data Analysis Techniques	Validity Assurances
This Study	Descriptive Qualitative	Year 3 pupils & teachers at SDN Saruni 4	Interviews, Observations, Documentation	Thematic Analysis (Miles et al., 2019); Triangulation, Member Checking	Triangulation, Member Checking
Pratiwi (2020)	Qualitative Case Study	Year 2 primary pupils	Observation, Interviews, Documentation	Thematic Coding, Data Reduction	Informant Validation
Kim (2020, Scopus Q2)	Exploratory Qualitative	Korean primary teachers & pupils	In-depth Interviews, Classroom Notes	Thematic Analysis	Peer Debriefing, Triangulation
Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022, Scopus Q1)	Longitudinal Mixed Methods	Children & Parents	Home Observations, Literacy Tests	Thematic Analysis, Descriptive Statistics	External Validity, Triangulation
Oktadiana (2019)	Descriptive Qualitative	Year 2 primary pupils	Observation, Interviews	Narrative Analysis, Data Reduction	Triangulation

Sources: Adapted from Pratiwi (2020); Kim (2020); Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022); Oktadiana (2019); data processed by the author.

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As shown in Table 2, this study's methodological design aligns with international best practices and employs a comprehensive triangulation strategy, ensuring validity and comparability with leading research in the field (Kim, 2020; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Miles et al., 2019).

In research on reading literacy in primary schools, qualitative methods have been widely used and proven effective for comprehensively exploring the dynamics of reading difficulties. Studies by Kim (2020) and Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022) employed similar methods, focusing on exploring the experiences of teachers and pupils in early literacy learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted on 24 Year 3 pupils at SDN Saruni 4, comprising 12 males and 12 females. Data were obtained through classroom observation, in-depth interviews with the class teacher, and documentation of pupils' learning outcomes. The findings reveal variations in pupils' reading ability ranging from those who read fluently to those who still experience significant difficulties with early reading.

The analysis of student reading abilities in this study is consistent with international research, which demonstrates wide individual differences in reading fluency and comprehension among primary school children (Cain & Oakhill, 2017; Catts et al., 2017; Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Suggate, 2016; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022). In line with findings from PIRLS and PISA (Mullis et al., 2017; OECD, 2019), the majority of students at SDN Saruni 4 have not yet achieved the expected reading proficiency for their grade, with only a small proportion demonstrating fluent and comprehensive reading skills.

The data obtained from the research findings correspond to actual events in the field or reflect the conditions as they exist there. The results of this study reveal the data obtained, whether through interviews or documentation. In this study, the indicators used to analyse pupils' reading difficulties at the primary school level comprised pupils' ability to recognise letters, their reading fluency, factors influencing their reading fluency, and teachers' strategies for assisting pupils who are not yet fluent in reading.

A more nuanced analysis of reading difficulties was conducted by triangulating interview, observation, and document data. The most prominent forms of reading difficulty, as summarized in Table 3, include inaccurate pronunciation, flat intonation, frequent pausing or repetition on multisyllabic words, failure to comprehend texts, and misuse of capital letters. These difficulties mirror findings in both Indonesian and global studies (Kim, 2020; Scarborough, 2001; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; van Bergen et al., 2022; Catts et al., 2017). Internationally, similar profiles are observed in early readers who struggle with both decoding and linguistic comprehension (Hoover & Gough, 1990; Piasta & Wagner, 2010).

Based on the results of the researcher's observations at SDN Saruni 4, through an interview with Mrs Dede, the form teacher of Class 3A, it is evident that there are indeed several pupils whose reading fluency is still lacking. To address students' difficulties with reading fluency, the teacher must have strategies for classroom instruction. The teacher's strategy for helping students improve their reading fluency is to use the 'early reading' method. The 'early reading' method is the phonics or alphabet method.

Phonics-based instruction, as implemented by teachers at SDN Saruni 4, aligns with international best practices and evidence-based approaches that have been shown to improve decoding and fluency (National Reading Panel, 2000; Suggate, 2016; Piasta & Wagner, 2010; Kim, 2020). However, the reliance on conventional methods and the lack of integration with comprehension strategies may limit the overall impact on students' reading development (Cain & Oakhill, 2017; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022).

The results of observations and interviews with the class teacher indicate that the most prominent forms of reading difficulty. First, pronunciation difficulties refer to pupils often mispronouncing letters or syllables, particularly in new or long words. In addition, intonation difficulties refer to pupils who tend to read with flat intonation and fail to distinguish among questions, commands, and statements. Furthermore, difficulty reading multisyllabic words stems from the fact that pupils often pause or repeat words with more than two syllables. Moreover, difficulty understanding what they read implies that although technically able

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to read, several pupils are unable to answer simple questions about the content of what they have read. Beyond that, mistakes in distinguishing between upper- and lower-case letters indicate that pupils are not yet able to distinguish the use of capital letters at the start of sentences and in proper nouns.

These patterns of difficulty are corroborated by Catts et al. (2017), who argue that problems with decoding, fluency, and comprehension frequently co-occur and are mutually reinforcing. The high incidence of mispronunciation and errors in letter recognition is similar to findings in other low-resource contexts (Mullis et al., 2017; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014).

The following table summarises the main findings from observations and documentation of pupils' learning outcomes: The specific types and frequency of reading difficulties observed among the students are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Types of Reading Difficulties Among Year 3 Pupils at SDN Saruni 4

Types of Difficulty	Number of Students (n=24)	Percentage (%)	Descriptions/Examples
Incorrect pronunciation of words/syllables	10	41.7%	Substituting, omitting, or mispronouncing letters or syllables (e.g., "banasa" for "bahasa")
Reading with a flat intonation	8	33.3%	Lacking expressive tone, monotone reading, failing to distinguish questions or statements
Pausing/stopping on long words	9	37.5%	Frequently stopping, hesitating, or repeating when encountering multisyllabic words
Failure to comprehend the text	7	29.2%	Unable to answer basic questions about the content after reading
Incorrect use of capital letters	11	45.8%	Misplacing uppercase and lowercase, not capitalizing sentence starts or proper nouns

Source: Field data (2026), processed by the author**.**

As shown in Table 3, the most prevalent issues are incorrect capitalization and mispronunciation, followed by difficulties with long words and intonation. These findings align with patterns identified in international studies of early literacy challenges (Kim, 2020; Catts et al., 2017; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022).

Factors Causing Reading Difficulties

Based on interviews with class teachers and student reflections, several main factors causing reading difficulties were identified, namely:

Internal Factors

a. Low motivation to learn indicates that several pupils lack confidence and are reluctant to practise reading at home (7 pupils)
b. Lack of interest in reading implies that several students prefer playing to reading books, both at school and at home (10 students)
c. Psychological barriers indicate that several students feel anxious when asked to read in front of the class (4 students)

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External factors

a. Lack of parental support refers to the fact that most parents are busy working, so they do not spend enough time helping their children learn to read (13 pupils)
b. An unsupportive home environment indicates that the students' surroundings lack reading materials and literacy activities (9 pupils)
c. Teachers' teaching strategies remain conventional, which implies that they admit they still frequently use traditional spelling methods without innovative teaching materials (as acknowledged in interviews)

The interaction of these internal and external factors is consistent with Scarborough's Reading Rope model (Scarborough, 2001) and recent meta-analyses (Suggate, 2016; Lonigan & Phillips, 2016), which highlight that motivation, the home literacy environment, and instructional quality are decisive for reading development. International research by Sénéchal & LeFevre (2014), Ouellette & Sénéchal (2022), and van Bergen et al. (2022) indicates that family engagement and a print-rich home environment are among the strongest predictors of reading success, while their absence can impede progress even with good classroom instruction. The contributing factors to students' reading difficulties, as identified from interviews and documentation, are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Factors Causing Reading Difficulties (Based on Teachers' and Students' Accounts)

Factor Categories	Causative Factors	Number of Students Affected	Percentage (%)	Notes
Internal	Low motivation	7	29.2%	–
Internal	Lack of interest in reading	10	41.7%	–
Internal	Anxiety whilst reading	4	16.7%	–
External	Lack of parental support	13	54.2%	–
External	Unsupportive home environment	9	37.5%	–
External	Teachers' strategies lack variety	Qualitative (not counted)	–	Based on the teacher interview only

Source: Interview and documentation data, processed by the author (2026).

Table 4 demonstrates that both internal factors (such as motivation and anxiety) and external factors (notably lack of parental support and unsupportive home environment) play significant roles in hindering reading fluency. The lack of innovative teaching strategies is highlighted by teachers but is presented as qualitative information, as it is not quantified among students. These findings are consistent with the literature emphasizing the importance of both home and school environments in early literacy (van Bergen et al., 2022; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014).

Teacher Strategies and Intervention Efforts

The teacher has implemented several strategies to address pupils' reading difficulties, including:

1. Establishing literacy activities: Reading the Asmaul Husna and simple texts every morning before lessons begin.
2. Setting reading homework: Each pupil is asked to read one paragraph every day and report back at the next session.

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3. Using picture books: Simple picture books are used to capture pupils' interest.
4. Individualised approach: Teachers provide special guidance to the students who struggle the most, particularly outside of main lesson times.
5. Motivation and rewards: Teachers give praise or small rewards to pupils who show progress in reading.

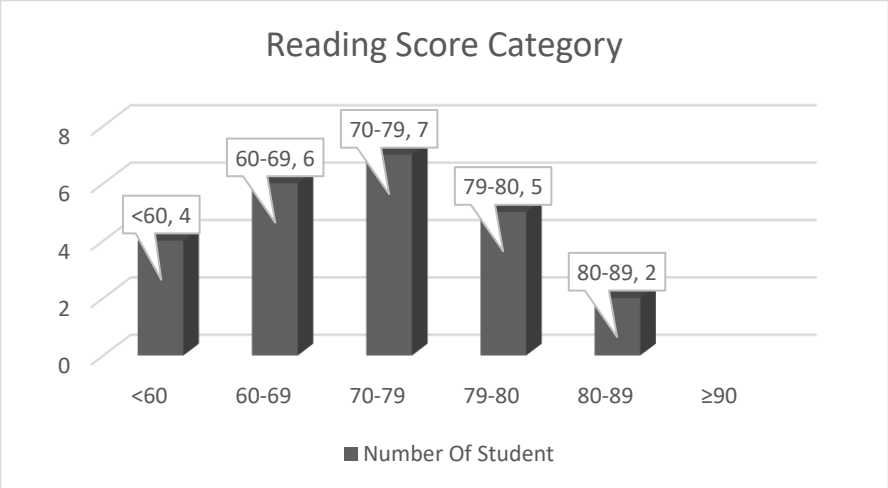
While these strategies are well-aligned with global recommendations for fostering a positive literacy climate (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Piasta et al., 2012; National Reading Panel, 2000), their effectiveness is often limited by external constraints such as lack of parental involvement and insufficient resources (Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014; Mullis et al., 2017). Internationally, interventions that combine school-based literacy programs with active parental engagement and digital resources show greater long-term impact (Kim, 2020; Piasta & Wagner, 2010; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005).

Reading Proficiency Score Distribution Chart

The following bar chart illustrates the distribution of students' reading fluency scores based on results from reading task documentation (Pass Mark = 70). The distribution of students' reading fluency scores, based on documentation and assessment records, is presented in Figure 1.

Table 5. Distribution of Reading Fluency Scores Among Year 3 Pupils at SDN Saruni 4

Reading Score Categories	Number of Students	Percentages (%)
< 60	4	16.7
60–69	6	25.0
70–79	7	29.2
80–89	5	20.8
≥ 90	2	8.3



Source: Reading assessment documentation (2024), processed by the author.

Figure 1. Distribution of Reading Fluency Scores Among Year 3 Pupils at SDN Saruni 4 (n = 24)

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Descriptions: < 60: 4 pupils (16.7%) 60–69: 6 pupils (25%) 70–79: 7 pupils (29.2%) 80–89: 5 students (20.8%) ≥90: 2 students (8.3%).

The majority of students fall within the 60-79 range, indicating that many have not yet met the school's minimum passing mark. Only 7 students (29.1%) are relatively proficient (scores ≥ 80). Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of students score in the 70-79 category, while only a small proportion score 90 or above. Meanwhile, several students still score below the minimum passing mark, indicating that reading fluency difficulties remain evident among some Year 3 pupils. These findings suggest that reading challenges are still associated with limited literacy exposure, reading motivation, and home literacy support. This pattern is also consistent with international literacy studies such as PIRLS and PISA, which report that students from environments with limited literacy support tend to demonstrate lower reading achievement and slower development of reading fluency (Mullis et al., 2017; OECD, 2019).

The skewed distribution suggests that systemic barriers such as limited home support and classroom resources need to be addressed alongside classroom interventions (Suggate, 2016; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022).

SWOT Matrix of Teacher Strategies

To systematically evaluate the strengths and limitations of teacher interventions, a SWOT analysis was conducted. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. SWOT Matrix of Teachers' Strategies for Improving Reading Skills at SDN Saruni 4

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Consistent implementation of daily literacy routines	Predominantly conventional teaching methods (e.g., rote, spelling)
Teachers' familiarity with students' individual needs	Limited time for individual student support due to large class size
Use of figures/illustrated reading materials	Minimal training and exposure to innovative literacy strategies
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential collaboration with local libraries and parents	Low parental involvement; parents' limited time and support
Utilization of digital technology for literacy enrichment	Scarcity of reading materials at home
Government literacy initiatives and school programs	Students' preference for digital entertainment over reading

Source: Teacher interview and observation data, processed by the author (2026).

Table 5 highlights that while teachers at SDN Saruni 4 have established consistent literacy routines and demonstrate close familiarity with students, persistent challenges remain—particularly related to resource limitations, conventional teaching practices, and low family engagement. International research underscores the need for ongoing professional development and stronger school–home partnerships to maximize the effectiveness of literacy interventions (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Piasta et al., 2012; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022).

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This SWOT analysis confirms that while teachers' current practices are well-intentioned and consistent with best-practice recommendations (National Reading Panel, 2000; Piasta et al., 2012), they are insufficient without broader support from families and the community (Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Studies indicate that improving sustainable literacy requires systemic changes, including parental education, resource provision, and ongoing teacher professional development (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2022; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005).

The research findings are consistent with national studies (Pratiwi, 2020; Rohman et al., 2022; Zahra et al., 2021; Oktadiana, 2019) that highlight decoding, fluency, and comprehension as the primary obstacles to early reading in Indonesia. However, compared to international research (Catts et al., 2017; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Kim, 2020), the results reveal that the persistence of these challenges is closely linked to environmental and motivational factors, not solely instructional ones. International research underscores the importance of holistic, multi-level interventions—combining classroom, family, and community strategies—for overcoming persistent reading difficulties (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014; Piasta et al., 2012; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000). In the Indonesian context, further innovation is needed to move beyond conventional methods and towards approaches that leverage digital media, foster active parental engagement, and build a stronger school–home literacy ecosystem (Kim, 2020; Mullis et al., 2017; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022).

Teachers' strategies at SDN Saruni 4 are already sound in fostering literacy habits and leveraging available media, but there is a clear need for innovation and more intensive collaboration with external partners, such as libraries and parents. The main threats stem from the home environment and children's habits outside school, particularly the lack of parental support and limited access to reading materials. Opportunities can be optimized by adopting digital literacy programs and involving the broader school community. However, teachers acknowledge that time constraints, large class sizes, and a lack of training in literacy innovation remain significant obstacles. These findings reinforce the need for systemic support and continuous professional development to ensure more effective literacy outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study demonstrates that reading difficulties among Year 3 pupils at SDN Saruni 4 remain a pressing issue, particularly in the domains of pronunciation, intonation, decoding multi-syllable words, and reading comprehension. Both internal factors such as low motivation, limited interest in reading, and student anxiety and external factors including insufficient parental support, an unsupportive home literacy environment, and predominantly conventional teaching methods were found to contribute substantially to these challenges.

While teachers have implemented a range of strategies, such as daily literacy routines, picture books, regular reading assignments, and individualized support, these interventions have only achieved partial effectiveness. Persistent obstacles include time constraints, large class sizes, and limited integration of technology-based or family-oriented literacy support. These limitations echo findings in international research that emphasize the importance of multi-level, context-sensitive interventions (Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2022; Lonigan & Phillips, 2016; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014).

The research results underscore the idea that sustainable improvement in early reading outcomes requires synergistic collaboration among schools, families, and the broader community. Efforts to improve literacy must move beyond classroom-based interventions to actively engage parents, enrich the home literacy environment, and provide teachers with ongoing professional development especially in the use of digital resources and innovative pedagogy.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Schools should prioritize structured family engagement programs to support literacy at home, including parent workshops and take-home reading materials.

2. Teachers should be provided with ongoing training in evidence-based and technology-supported literacy instruction to diversify classroom strategies and better address individual learning needs.
3. Policymakers and school leaders should invest in improving school and community resources, such as access to libraries, digital devices, and culturally relevant reading materials.
4. Further research should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of integrated literacy interventions and adapt strategies to different local contexts.
5. Ultimately, addressing reading difficulties in primary education demands a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach. By fostering collaboration among educators, families, and the wider community, schools can more effectively support all children in achieving foundational literacy skills necessary for future academic and personal success.

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