READING INTEREST CHARACTER OF PROSPECTIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AT UNIVERSITAS PENDIDIKAN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Reading interest is one of the fundamental skills in language and is a highly effective learning activity for acquiring knowledge and literacy. Reading literacy is an essential skill, particularly for prospective educators; however, many students experience challenges in cultivating a reading habit. This research aims to: (1) describe the reading interest conditions of prospective teacher students at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), (2) elucidate the supporting and inhibiting factors for prospective teacher students (PTS) at UPI in their reading activities. This study employs a quantitative approach with a survey design. The research subjects are UPI PGSD (Elementary School Teacher Education) students. Data collection methods include questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. Data analysis involves descriptive analysis, frequency distribution, and percentage calculation. The findings reveal that: (1) the overall reading interest of PTS is categorized as low, (2) students' activities on campus before class hours mainly involve waiting and chatting with friends; only a small portion of students utilize their free time to read books or visit the library. (3) PTS' preferred books are novels and fiction, while scientific texts are less favored due to unappealing design and layout, (4) the time spent on reading books by PTS is relatively short, with less than 1 hour daily, and some do not allocate any time for reading, except when there are assignments or exams, (5) the major inhibiting factors for PTS in reading are internal, indicated by low reading habits or preferences for other interests over reading.

Keywords: Character; Reading Interest; Reading Literacy; Prospective Teacher Students.

Abstrak

Karakter minat baca merupakan salah satu kemampuan dasar dalam berbahasa dan merupakan aktivitas belajar yang cukup efektif untuk memperoleh ilmu dan pengetahuan, literasi membaca seyogyanya merupakan kemampuan yang sangat penting untuk dimiliki, terutama bagi para calon pendidik, namun tidak sedikit permasalahan malas membaca dialami oleh mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk; (1) mendeskripsikan kondisi minat membaca mahasiswa calon guru di Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI). (2) memaparkan faktor pendukung dan penghambat Mahasiswa calon guru (MCG) di UPI dalam membaca. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan jenis survey. Subyek penelitian adalah mahasiswa Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar (PGSD) UPI. Metode pengumpulan data pada penelitian ini menggunakan kuesioner, angket dan wawancara. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis deskriptif, distribusi frekuensi dan persentase. Dari penelitian ditemukan bahwa; (1) minat membaca MCG secara umum termasuk dalam kategori rendah, (2) aktivitas mahasiswa dikampus saat belum mulai jam pelajaran adalah menunggu dan mengobrol Bersama teman, hanya sebagian kecil mahasiswa yang memanfaatkan waktu luang untuk membaca buku atau berkunjung ke perpustakaan. (3) buku yang paling disukai MCG adalah jenis buku-buku novel, fiksi sedangkan untuk teks ilmiah kurang diminati karena desain dan layout kurang menarik, (4) intensitas waktu yang diluangkan MCG dalam membaca buku relatif sebentar, yaitu kurang dari 1 jam tiap harinya bahkan ada yang tidak meluangkan waktunya sama sekali untuk membaca, kecuali saat ada tugas atau menjelang ujian, (5) faktor yang menghambat MCG dalam membaca, yang paling besar adalah berasal dari dalam diri mahasiswa yang ditunjukan dengan kebiasaan atau kegemaran membaca yang masih rendah dan minat lain yang lebih disukai dibanding membaca.

Kata Kunci: Karakter; Minat Baca; Literasi membaca; Mahasiswa Calon Guru

Introduction

One characteristic of a university as an educational institution is the academic community's continuous exploration and refinement of knowledge through learning (Ismail et al., 2017). Learning is the effort made by academic members, including both faculty and students, to acquire knowledge and understanding, transforming from a state of not knowing, not understanding, to knowing and comprehending something (Hardianto, 2018; Dewi & Prawita, 2019). In campus, learning can take various forms, such as attending lectures, engaging in discussions, conducting research, participating in academic forums, and reading books (Latifah, 2020). These learning methods have been ongoing at the university.

Interest in reading is a driving force so that children are interested, pay attention and enjoy reading activities so that they are willing to carry out these activities happily of their own accord (Septian et al., 2020). Reading activities should be a daily routine activity of the scientific and academic community, because their duties require them to continue carrying out these reading activities. (Maliki et al., 2022). Reading books is an effective learning activity for acquiring knowledge (Budiastuti & Mulyadi, 2019). Through reading, students and faculty can quickly and easily gain knowledge by selecting a book, opening it, and starting to read word by word (Lubis, 2021). Hence, reading should be a fundamental activity for the academic community, especially for students. As students are components of the academic community seeking knowledge, reading should be a primary agenda for them and Reading literacy skills must be looked at holistically, from aspects within the reader and factors outside of it. (Ulla et al., 2020). Reading provides inspiration, knowledge, and sharpens students' critical thinking.

However, there is a current issue where the interest of students for reading is very low (Budiastuti & Mulyadi, 2019). According to some sources on the internet, the reading level of students in Indonesia is notably low (Dewi & Prawita, 2019), as evidenced by the high number of unemployed bachelor's degree (S1) graduates in 2022, reaching 1,120,128 (detik.com). Setiawan (2008) suggests that this unemployment may be due to students being lazy to read, write, and even having others complete their assignments.

The reluctance to read is affecting today's students (Purwaningsih et al., 2017). Many students can graduate without ever stepping into a library. The phenomenon of students being reluctant to read is a common issue among students nowadays (Siswati, 2010). This issue seems to be occurring at one of the campuses, where our observations indicate a low level of reading among students, as reflected in the minimal and often irrelevant references in their assignments. Research on learners' literacy understanding in the western world is always linked to external factors. This research is different from previous research because it looks at literacy factors and the habituation of activities carried out by students with external factors (Ulla et al., 2020). Additionally, students' interest in the library is also low, with students only utilizing it before exams or when given assignments by professors (Susilawati & Marlianingsih, 2018).

Furthermore, outside these academic activities, students prefer to spend time in the cafeteria or return to their nearby boarding houses. Interestingly, during breaks or empty class hours, many students at UPI, especially those in the PGSD program, engage in non-academic conversations, and only a few are seen reading books. This phenomenon is intriguing and

warrants further study, exploring the current state of UPI PGSD students, identifying factors influencing their reading interest, and finding suitable methods to motivate them to increase their reading enthusiasm.

Research Methods

This research employs a quantitative approach through a survey method. The study aims to uncover the phenomenon of reading interest among UPI PGSD students. Based on its objectives, the survey research is conducted for three purposes: description, explanation, and exploration (Adiyanta, 2019). In this study, the goal is to describe the phenomenon (Maidiana, 2021). The research is conducted in the PGSD program at UPI, with the research subjects are third and fifth semester of PGSD students. Furthermore, the sampling technique used is simple random sampling.

Data collection methods include the use of questionnaires, observations, and interviews. Questionnaires are intended to reveal data from respondents through written questions, given the large population size. Additionally, to strengthen the data, direct observations are carried out, covering various student activities to ensure data validity and reliability. Interviews are also conducted as supporting data to reinforce the information obtained through the questionnaire and observation. In this study, data analysis is performed using descriptive analysis, where survey results are reported in the form of frequency tabulation and percentages (Caingcoy, 2021).

Results and Discussions

This research objectives are to reveal the reading interest of UPI PGSD students, including aspects such as reading habits, books read, activities when students are on campus, students' access to learning resources, and factors influencing the reading interest of UPI PGSD students. After distributing questionnaires to PGSD students, 30 responses were collected through Google Forms. During the questionnaire distribution, the researcher also conducted interviews with students to deepen and strengthen the collected data. The distributed questionnaire responses were then processed into percentage data. In addition to percentage data, direct observation and interviews were conducted to reinforce the processed data. Direct observations included monitoring student activities on campus, especially during class changes, empty lecture periods, student access to the library, and student access to the internet.

Interesting for reading of Student in PGSD UPI

In general, the reading interest of PGSD students can be categorized as low, as indicated by 70.20% of students stating that they sometimes have the desire to read. The response "sometimes" suggests that most students lack a strong interest in reading, as expressed by MG, who mentioned that "reading is usually due to assignments from lucturer or approaching exams." This statement is further supported by RA, who also answered "sometimes" on the distributed questionnaire, stating "reading books if there will be an exam, or because there is an assignment from the professor." Reading requires high concentration, and some individuals experience issues with this concentration, as stated by MG: "When reading, I usually can't grasp the content, it's hard to remember the message from the recently read material." This aligns with previous research findings that concentration difficulties pose a barrier to cultivating reading interest (Sudarsana, 2016). Meanwhile, RA expresses the challenges of reading on campus, stating, "Reading on campus is difficult, there are many

disturbances." The disruptions mentioned here include invitations from friends to engage in activities other than reading, an atmosphere that is less conducive, and an unsupportive environment. From the statements above, it can be concluded that concentration and external environment significantly influence an individual's reading interest, aligning with the opinion of (Hapsari et al., 2019) in their research. Access to books can be indicative of a person's motivation and interest in reading. Someone who frequently accesses books is assumed to have a high interest in reading, while someone who rarely accesses books may be categorized as having low motivation for reading. When asked about book access, MG explains, "I access new books when there is a book fair," while SA reveals, "During my time in Sumedang, I have never visited a bookstore." Similarly, only 20.75% of students have access to books in the library. Observations in the field show that students who visit the library are relatively few, and most come to the library only when they have assignments.

Looking at these statements, students' access to books is still very low, indicating low motivation for reading. While reading books, students feel they gain little knowledge, perceive reading as a boring activity, and tend to consider it a waste of time. However, not all PGSD students lack the desire to read; 30.90% of students have a high motivation to read. In addition, they feel they gain a lot of knowledge and insights through reading. Reading becomes a necessity, and they schedule a portion of their time for it every day. As stated by RSN, "By reading, I gain a lot of new knowledge and insights. Besides, as students, we are required to always read, whether there is an exam or not." RSN also reveals having a fixed schedule for reading, saying, "Every day, I schedule at least 1 hour to read a book."

For access to books and keeping up with the latest book developments, PGSD students are still categorized as low, with only 7.87% of students always accessing books or keeping up with the latest book trends. The rest of the students only make time to read necessary books and buy them if there is a book fair. In fact, 20.7% of students never follow the latest developments in books. From the above data, it can be concluded that the interest and motivation for reading among PGSD students are still low. Most students answer "sometimes" to questions about reading interest and access to new books, which is above 60%. However, upon closer examination, the "sometimes" responses from students tend to lean towards "rarely" or even "never" reading every day. This can be observed in the limited use of learning resources on campus, such as the library. During leisure time on campus, students often prefer to socialize in the cafeteria or even return to their boarding houses rather than engage in activities like reading books. What's more interesting is that students are more likely to be seen holding their smartphones (engaging in social media) than reading books.

Activities of students on campus during non-academic

Hours vary, especially during breaks between classes or when classes are empty. According to interviews, when classes are empty, most students either sit in front of the classroom waiting for the professor (30.6%) or sit in the cafeteria, chatting with friends (25.6%). Only 16.7% of students utilize their free time to read books or visit the library. This observation is supported by daily observations, where many PGSD students are seen sitting in front of classrooms or in the cafeteria chatting with their peers. Time that could be optimized for reading, searching for books in the library, or discussing with friends is often not used effectively. As AN puts it, "If classes are empty or the professor is absent, it's better to go home to rest or lie down." While non-academic activities on campus vary, the majority do not involve reading. The campus, which should be a source of knowledge, appears to be lacking positive activities like reading and discussion among students. Instead, many students engage

in non-educational activities, such as playing with their phones, checking social media, and other unrelated activities.

Books Preferred by PGSD Students

The type of books most enjoyed by PGSD students is popular books (fiction, political books, training books, popular education books, motivational books) at 40.3%. As FL puts it, "The books I read most frequently are fiction books like novels and motivational books." In addition to fiction books, the text preferred by students to read is online news at 35.6%. However, a small percentage (24.1%) of students enjoys reading textbooks. It is interesting to explore further why students do not favor reading textbooks. Reasons vary, with some students finding textbook language too formal. For example, ZM mentions, "Textbooks use very formal language, so I prefer to read lighter materials." ZM further explains, "Textbooks are mostly text, and the writing is small, so reading them makes my eyes tired." Similar reasons are mentioned by QY, who says, "Textbooks are mostly monotonous and consist only of text; there are rarely any pictures to reinforce the message. So, reading them becomes tedious. If it's not for an exam or completing assignments, students are reluctant to read textbooks."

The above notes raise an interesting question: why are popular books more preferred by students for reading? Field studies and interviews reveal that popular books offer more up-to-date information, attractive titles, varied content, including images, and less monotonous text. Some popular books are even colorful, in line with research indicating that colorful book titles are more attractive (Yahdizar, 2006) While motivation for reading among PGSD students, especially for textbooks, tends to be driven by external factors (writing style, language used, images, font size, and so on), it is essential for authors to seriously consider these external factors in book writing, as highlighted in previous research penelitian (Hapsari et al., 2019).

An interesting observation from the above data is that journals, which should be a source of reading for students, are the least preferred, at only 5.7%. Students consider journals boring, difficult to find, and the language used is hard to understand. This is supported by TA's statement, "Journals are hard to find, and the language used is very boring, but for assignment purposes, I have to read them." While 42.68% of students read fewer than one book per month, some don't find the time to read a book within a month. For instance, MB states, "I almost never read books, except before exams, and even then, I only read lecture notes during class." (with a shy smile).

The time a student dedicates to reading

The time a student dedicates to reading an indicate whether they have a high or low reading interest. Someone who allocates time to read every day is likely to have a high motivation to learn, gain insights, and acquire knowledge. Conversely, someone with unstable reading intensity tends to lack a high motivation to read. Reading demands an individual's awareness of learning, and if someone is conscious about reading, it shows their commitment to allocate their available time. On the other hand, low reading intensity and weak commitment indicate a lack of intrinsic motivation, with external forces driving the reading behavior. Examining the time students allocate for reading, the data shows that 58.53% of students spend less than 1 hour reading each day, 36.58% spend 1-2 hours, and only 3.65% dedicate more than 2 hours to reading daily. When asked further about the time they spend reading each day, some students admitted to not allocating time for daily reading. DN mentioned, "I don't have to read every day, depending on the situation," and NN added, "Reading is not necessary every day; sometimes I read, but most of the time, I don't."

Factors Inhibiting Students in Reading

From the presented data, factors inhibiting students in reading can be identified. The most significant factor comes from within the students themselves, as indicated by the very low habit or interest in reading. If someone enjoys reading, it can be assumed that they have a high interest in it (Hapsari et al., 2019). Reading is not a habit or lifestyle for PGSD students, as shown by the minimal time they allocate for reading. External factors include the type of reading material; students are less interested in reading textbooks or scientific texts for various reasons such as difficult language, unappealing book layouts, and the stiffness and monotony of scientific texts. The campus environment also acts as a hindering factor for students in reading. SA expressed, "The campus environment is not conducive for reading because there are many disturbances from friends." However, when looking at the facilities provided by the campus for reading, such as seating and libraries, they are quite adequate and conducive for students to utilize for reading.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the data and the discussion of the research results, it can be concluded that: First, reading interest of PGSD UPI students, in general, falls into the low category. This is evidenced by the fact that 66.7% of students occasionally read every day. The "occasional" responses indicate a low interest in reading. Second, the activities of students on campus outside of class hours vary. However, the most common activities include waiting in front of the classroom or even going back to their boarding houses. Few students utilize their free time to read books or visit the library. Third, the preferred books for PGSD students to read are popular genres such as political books, training books, popular education books, motivational books, and fiction. Scientific texts, on the other hand, are less favored due to reasons like rigid writing, difficult language, unappealing layout, and others. Fourth, the intensity of time allocated by students for reading is relatively low, often less than 1 hour per day or only during exam periods. Fifth, there are factors inhibiting students in reading, with the most significant being internal factors stemming from the students themselves. This is demonstrated by the very low reading habits or interests among PGSD students. Reading is not a common habit or lifestyle for them. External factors include the type of reading material, as students show less interest in textbooks or scientific texts due to reasons like difficult language, unappealing layout, and the stiffness of scientific texts. The campus environment also acts as a hindering factor, mainly due to an atmosphere that is less conducive to reading.

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