Pedagogika: Jurnal Pedagogik dan Dinamika Pendidikan
P-ISSN 2252-6676 E-ISSN 2746-184X, Volume 14, No. 2, Oktober 2026
doi: https://doi.org/10.30598/pedagogikavol14issue2year2026
https://ojs3.unpatti.ac.id/index.php/pedagogika
email: jurnalpedagogika@gmail.com

Analysis of Factors Causing Reading Difficulties in Second Grade Students Reviewed from the Perspective of Literacy Habits at Home and School

Lela Dyah Kusuma Putri[1*], Anita Trisiana[2], Jumanto[3]

[1*,2,3]Primary School Teacher Education Study Program, Slamet Riyadi University, Surakarta, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received July 10, 2026
Revised August 23, 2026
Accepted August 24, 2026
Available online October 30, 2026

Keywords:
reading difficulties; early reading; literacy practices; home literacy; school literacy.

Kata Kunci:
kesulitan membaca; membaca permulaan; pembiasaan literasi; literasi di rumah; literasi di sekolah.

Corresponding Author:
leladiah00@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Basic reading skills are essential for elementary school students, but some second-grade students still struggle. This study aims to determine the causes of reading difficulties among second-grade students at Bibisluhur I Elementary School in Surakarta by examining literacy habits at home and at school. This study used a qualitative case study approach. The subjects included a second-grade teacher, five students with reading difficulties, and their five parents. Data were collected through observations, interviews, initial reading tests, and the recording of relevant documents. The data were then analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model. To ensure the accuracy of the results, a comparison was conducted using various sources and the application of these techniques. The study showed that students had difficulty recognizing letters, spelling, reading fluency, and comprehension, and lacked confidence when reading. The causal factors can be divided into internal and external factors. The main factors are a lack of reading habits at home and limited parental guidance, which are further worsened by extensive gadget use and limited access to reading materials. Therefore, improving reading skills requires ongoing collaboration between schools and families through consistent reading habits.

ABSTRAK

Kemampuan membaca dasar merupakan keterampilan penting yang membantu siswa SD dalam belajar, tetapi masih ada siswa kelas II yang kesulitan dalam membaca. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penyebab kesulitan siswa kelas II SD Negeri Bibisluhur I Surakarta dalam membaca, dengan melihat kebiasaan literasi yang dilakukan di rumah dan di sekolah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari seorang guru kelas II, lima siswa yang mengalami kesulitan dalam membaca, dan lima orang tua dari para siswa tersebut. Data dikumpulkan dengan cara mengamati, berbicara langsung, melakukan tes bacaan awal, serta mencatat dokumen-dokumen yang relevan, lalu dianalisis menggunakan model Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana.Untuk memastikan kebenaran hasil, dilakukan pemeriksaan dengan membandingkan dari berbagai sumber dan menerapkan teknik tersebut. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami masalah dalam mengenali huruf, membaca dengan cara mengeja, kelancaran membaca yang rendah, pemahaman terhadap bacaan yang kurang, serta kurangnya rasa percaya diri saat membaca. Faktor penyebab dapat dibagi

menjadi faktor internal dan faktor eksternal. Faktor utama adalah kurangnya kebiasaan membaca di rumah dan kurangnya bimbingan dari orang tua, yang semakin diperburuk oleh banyaknya penggunaan gadget dan keterbatasan akses terhadap bacaan. Oleh karena itu, meningkatkan kemampuan membaca membutuhkan kekompakan antara sekolah dan keluarga dengan menjalankan kebiasaan belajar membaca secara terus-menerus.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious, planned effort to create a learning process that enables students to develop their potential, character, intelligence, and the skills needed for social and national life (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003). Education also develops human physical and mental potential through a quality learning process, thereby improving the quality of human resources and community life. (Samini et al., 2023; Anita Trisiana, 2024)Therefore, educational success is greatly influenced by the achievement of students' basic skills, especially reading skills as a foundation for acquiring knowledge and developing learning skills.

Reading skills are essential for elementary school students because they lay the foundation for acquiring knowledge and strengthening thinking skills. Through reading activities, students can better understand information, expand their vocabulary, practice critical thinking, and improve academic achievement across all subject areas. Students who struggle with reading often struggle to comprehend material, which can lower academic performance. Therefore, students must master basic reading skills at the beginning of elementary school to participate in the next level of learning. (Ananda & Suhendar, 2022; Rosdiana et al., 2025).

Beginning reading is the first part of learning to read, focusing on recognizing letters, connecting letters with their pronunciations, and fluently reading syllables, words, and simple sentences. Mastering these skills lays the foundation for improving reading and comprehension. If a student struggles with reading from the beginning, their learning in other subjects will also be disrupted, as most learning activities require strong reading skills.(Hasmi, 2017; Utami, 2024).

A child's success in learning to read depends not only on internal abilities but also on external factors that support reading. One of the government's steps to improve reading habits is the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which aims to encourage students to read books regularly at school. This program encourages reading habits by holding pre-school reading activities, providing a variety of reading materials, and creating a text-rich learning environment. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018)However, the success of literacy programs in schools still requires support from literacy habits at home, as the home is the first environment where children learn. Reading together, having enough reading materials, and parents' role in guiding children to learn to read are important factors that influence the development of children's literacy skills. (Lailan et al., 2022).

Various studies have shown that early reading difficulties can be influenced by both internal and external factors. Adrian et al. (2023) showed that low reading ability can result from low enthusiasm for learning, poor letter recognition, limited parental attention, and an inadequate learning environment. Irawan and his team (2023) also found that physical, mental, and family factors influence reading difficulties among elementary school students. Irawan et al. (2023) also explain that physiological, psychological, and family environmental factors contribute to reading barriers in elementary school students. In addition, Warsin et al. (2023)stated that minimal parental support and ineffective reading learning methods in schools are the main factors

contributing to low initial reading ability in students. These findings indicate that reading ability results from several interrelated factors, requiring attention from both families and schools.

Although extensive research has been conducted on reading difficulties, most of these studies provide only general conclusions about internal and external factors. Research that specifically examines reading difficulties through the lens of literacy habits in home and school environments remains very limited. However, these two environments are the primary settings where children's reading habits are formed. Low reading frequency at home, limited parental participation, excessive digital device use, and inadequate literacy activities at school are believed to influence students' reading abilities. Therefore, more research is needed on the relationship between literacy habits and the emergence of reading difficulties in elementary school students.

Initial observations in grade II of Bibisluhur I Elementary School, Surakarta, showed that students' reading abilities varied. Some students could already read well, but others had difficulty recognizing letters, spelling, reading, and understanding simple texts. Interviews with class teachers also indicated that some students still needed further guidance in learning to read, necessitating the identification of the causes of these difficulties. This situation suggests that teaching basic reading remains a barrier that both schools and parents must address.

Based on the description above, this study is unique in examining the factors that cause reading difficulties in second-grade students by exploring literacy habits in two primary environments: home and school. This analysis is expected to deepen understanding of the root causes of reading difficulties and provide a basis for efforts to improve literacy culture through teachers and parents. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the factors that cause reading difficulties in second-grade students of Bibisluhur I Elementary School, Surakarta, in terms of their literacy habits.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative case study to understand better the factors causing reading difficulties in second-grade students, considering the literacy habits students develop at school and at home. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research was conducted in natural settings without disturbing the participants, allowing for a more realistic representation of the phenomenon. (Sugiyono, 2013).

The research was conducted at Bibisluhur I Elementary School in Surakarta. Subjects included one second-grade teacher, five second-grade students with early reading difficulties, and five of their parents. The research topic was determined using a purposive sampling method, which involves deliberately selecting informants because they are considered to have the most understanding and direct experience with the phenomenon being studied, thus providing information that aligns with the research objectives. (Sugiyono, 2013).

Research data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, basic reading tests, and relevant document recording. Observations were used to understand how the reading learning process occurs and how schools consistently implement literacy habits. Interviews with teachers, students, and parents provided information on the types of reading difficulties and the factors contributing to them. An initial reading test was used to assess students' ability to recognize letters, read syllables, words, and sentences clearly. Documentation was used as supporting evidence in the form of activity photographs, reading assessment results, and school files related to literacy implementation. (Sugiyono, 2013; Salim, 2019).

Data validity was tested through source comparison activities and the application of different techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by processing information obtained from teachers, students, and parents. At the same time, technical triangulation was implemented by reviewing the results of observations, interviews, tests, and documents, resulting in more reliable and credible data. (Sugiyono, 2013).

In this study, data analysis was conducted using an interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). This model includes four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verifying the results. Analysis was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection until the study's conclusion, allowing each finding to be reviewed to ensure the conclusions are accurate and reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aims to identify the causes of reading difficulties among second-grade students at Bibisluhur I Elementary School in Surakarta, with a particular focus on the literacy habits students practice at home and at school. This study obtained data through direct observation, interviews with teachers, students, and parents, initial reading tests, and the collection of relevant documents. Data analysis shows that students' reading difficulties are caused by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include difficulty recognizing letters, a reading style that focuses on each letter individually, not-yet-fluent reading skills, insufficient understanding of the material being read, and low self-confidence when reading. External factors include poor reading habits at home, limited parental support, extensive use of electronic devices, and limited access to books at home.

Table 1. Research Findings Regarding Reading Difficulties in Second Grade Students

No	Research Findings	Description of Findings
1	Difficulty recognizing letters	Some students still have difficulty recognizing and differentiating letters that have nearly identical shapes. S4 (Arfan) revealed that he still experiences confusion when encountering letters that have nearly identical shapes. "I'm still confused when there are letters that have nearly identical shapes, so sometimes I misread them."
2	Reading by spelling	Students still read by spelling, especially when encountering long or unfamiliar words. S2 (Dian) said, "When I read, I still often spell, especially when the words are difficult." This condition indicates that the ability to combine letters and syllables directly still needs improvement.
3	Low reading fluency	Some students are not yet able to read words and sentences fluently. They still read slowly, pause, or repeat reading. S2 (Dian) said she still has difficulty reading, which makes it take longer. "When I read, I still often have to spell, especially with difficult words."
4	Low reading comprehension	Students' difficulties are not only evident in their ability to pronounce readings, but also in understanding the information they read. S3 (Meyusa) still struggles to comprehend readings optimally. "When I read, sometimes I still don't understand the

		content." This indicates that students' reading ability has not fully matched their ability to comprehend the content.
5	Lack of self-confidence	Some students feel less confident when asked to read in front of teachers or peers. S3 (Meyusa) said, "I'm still embarrassed when asked to read in front of my friends because I'm afraid of making mistakes." Fear of making mistakes makes students less confident in reading independently.
6	Low literacy habits at home	Reading activities at home are not routine, so students have limited opportunities for practice. O1 (Mama Alden) said, "If reading at home isn't routine, sometimes children will read when reminded." This finding suggests that reading is not yet a consistent activity at home.
7	Lack of parental guidance	Parental support in reading activities is still limited because parents don't always have time to accompany their children in learning. O1 (Alden's mother) said, "I still accompany them when I have time, but I can't accompany them in reading every day." This situation means that reading practice at home has not been optimal.
8	High use of gadgets and limited reading materials	Using gadgets has become a more engaging activity for students than reading. Furthermore, the availability of reading materials at home is still limited. O1 (Mama Alden) said, "I play with my phone more often than I read books." Meanwhile, O2 (Mama Dian) said, "I don't read every day at home. Learning to read usually requires guidance, and there aren't many children's books."

The initial reading test results showed that the five students studied still struggled in several reading-related areas. The main obstacle was difficulty recognizing similar-looking letters, such as b and d or p and q. This situation makes students take longer to read, because they must first recognize each letter before combining them into syllables and words. Classroom observations showed that students who had difficulty recognizing the letter c tended to read more slowly than their peers when asked to read in turns.

Furthermore, some students still read by spelling. They read letters or syllables individually before pronouncing the whole word. This habit slows reading and hinders the development of reading fluency. The class teacher explained that students who still read by spelling need more intensive support because they often stop mid-reading and need help when they encounter unfamiliar words.

Another difficulty identified was low reading fluency. Based on reading test results, some students still read slowly, often repeating words, and taking a long time to complete simple reading passages. This lack of fluency impacted their ability to comprehend the text. After finishing reading, some students still could not answer questions about the text's content or restate the information they had read. This suggests that students were still focused on pronouncing words, so their understanding of the text's meaning was not yet well developed.

From a psychological perspective, the study also found that some students have low self-confidence when asked to read in front of the class. Interviews revealed that students feared making mistakes, which led them to read quietly or refuse to read. This was evident throughout the learning process, with students more often waiting for teacher assistance than attempting to read independently.

Research findings indicate that the environment influences students' reading difficulties. Interviews with parents revealed that reading has not yet become a consistent family habit. Most parents reported that their children spend more time playing games or watching videos on their mobile phones than reading books. Furthermore, parents' limited time to accompany their children as they learn to read results in less-than-optimal reading practice at home. This situation is worsened by the limited availability of reading materials at home, leaving students with few opportunities to develop reading habits outside school.

Despite this, observations indicate that Bibisluhur I Elementary School in Surakarta has implemented various literacy programs, including pre-classroom reading activities, providing reading corners in each classroom, and optimizing the use of the school library. Furthermore, teachers provide special support to students experiencing reading difficulties. However, research findings indicate that these efforts are not fully effective in addressing reading difficulties unless they are accompanied by ongoing literacy habits within the family.

Overall, this study found that second-grade students' reading challenges stem from both internal and external factors. The main contributing factors are a lack of reading habits at home and parents' inadequate role in guiding children to learn to read. Therefore, improving reading ability requires not only effective learning methods at school but also parental support by encouraging children to read regularly and consistently.

Discussion

Research shows that second-grade students at Bibisluhur I Elementary School in Surakarta struggle to learn to read due to both internal and external factors. These factors interact and collectively shape students' initial reading ability. These findings indicate that students' reading ability depends not only on their thinking patterns but also on their learning environment, particularly the reading habits cultivated at home and at school.

Early reading difficulties are primarily evident in letter recognition. Based on initial reading test findings, observations, and interviews, some students still struggle to distinguish between similarly shaped letters, such as b and d and p and q. This often leads to errors when students read relatively simple words or sentences. Letter recognition is the initial stage that forms the foundation for learning to read. If this ability is not well developed, students often struggle in later stages of reading, such as understanding syllables, words, and even complete sentences. These findings align with research. Silvia et al. (2021) state that recognizing letters is a crucial prerequisite for developing early reading skills. Therefore, teachers must provide repeated letter-recognition practice through engaging media and learning activities so students can correctly distinguish letter shapes and sounds.

The next finding shows that some students still read by spelling. Spelling habits require students to spend more time reading because they must combine letters or syllables before pronouncing the full word. This condition hinders reading fluency and reduces students' focus on the content. This finding aligns with Adrian et al. (2023), who found that students who read by spelling generally have not yet achieved optimal mastery of initial reading skills and therefore require intensive, continuous reading practice. Therefore, reading instruction should focus on improving whole-word reading through a variety of exercises tailored to the student's developmental stage.

This study also found that low reading fluency is a major cause of reading difficulties. Some students still read haltingly, frequently pausing and repeating words

when reading simple texts. Low reading fluency affects reading comprehension because students focus more on pronouncing words than on understanding the text's meaning. This finding aligns with Elendiana's (2020) opinion. This means that reading fluency is a crucial component of reading comprehension. The better a student's reading fluency, the greater their chances of understanding the information contained in the text. Therefore, regular reading aloud practice is necessary to develop students' reading skills gradually.

In addition to cognitive factors, research findings also indicate that emotional factors influence students' reading ability. Some students appear less confident when reading in front of the class. They fear making mistakes, so they read slowly, hesitantly, and some are even reluctant to read at all. This condition makes students less enthusiastic about participating in reading activities and prevents them from improving their reading skills through continuous practice. These findings suggest that teachers need to create a comfortable, supportive learning environment; offer positive praise or recognition; and avoid labeling or stigmatizing students who experience reading comprehension difficulties. This way, students' enthusiasm for learning and self-confidence can develop better.

In addition to internal factors, research results indicate that external factors also contribute significantly to students' reading ability. The most influential external factor is the suboptimal literacy habits within the family environment. Based on interviews with parents, reading has not become a routine habit at home. Most students also lack a dedicated time or schedule for reading, so their opportunities to practice reading are limited. Consistent reading habits are crucial to developing children's reading skills. These findings support research. Prasrihamni et al. (2022) state that a culture of literacy within the family contributes to the development of children's literacy skills from an early age. The more frequently children interact with reading materials at home, the better their reading skills develop.

Lack of parental support also contributes to students' reading difficulties. Interviews revealed that some parents struggle to provide effective reading support due to work or other commitments. This prevents students from receiving ongoing guidance at home when they face reading difficulties. However, parental participation in the learning process is crucial, as it can boost children's enthusiasm for learning and improve their reading skills. These findings align with the findings of the study. Adrian et al. (2023) stated that parental involvement in the learning process positively contributes to improving students' reading skills. Therefore, collaboration between schools and parents needs to be strengthened through more intensive communication regarding improving students' reading skills and implementing appropriate learning support strategies at home.

Other external factors include heavy gadget use and limited access to reading materials at home. Research shows that some students spend more time using their mobile phones than reading books. Furthermore, the limited collection of reading materials at home reduces students' opportunities to engage with a variety of materials. This situation hinders the development of sustainable reading habits. While gadgets can be used as learning tools, their use needs to be monitored to prevent them from reducing study and reading time. Parents also need to provide reading materials that match their children's interests and age to make reading more enjoyable.

This study found that schools have made various efforts to improve students' reading skills through literacy programs. These programs include pre-classroom reading activities, reading corners in each classroom, optimized use of the school library, and support for students experiencing reading difficulties. These programs reflect the

school's commitment to fostering a literacy culture within the educational environment. However, the research indicates that literacy programs are most effective when supported by consistent reading habits at home. Therefore, developing students' reading skills requires strong collaboration between schools, families, and the surrounding community to create a sustainable literacy ecosystem.

Overall, the study results indicate that the challenges faced by second-grade students at Bibisluhur I Elementary School in Surakarta in reading activities are influenced by internal and external factors, such as environmental conditions and the learning atmosphere at school. Internal factors include difficulty distinguishing letters, reading habits focused on pronouncing each letter, low reading fluency, limited reading comprehension, and low confidence when reading. External factors include low reading literacy at home, limited parental support as children learn to read, excessive gadget use, and limited access to reading materials. Of these factors, low reading literacy at home and parents' limited role in supporting children as they learn to read are the most significant. These findings confirm that improving children's reading skills does not depend solely on school instruction but also requires ongoing collaboration between teachers and parents to build consistent reading habits in any environment.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

In general, this study revealed that the challenges faced by second-grade students at Bibisluhur I Elementary School in Surakarta in reading ability are influenced by various factors, both internal and external, such as the surrounding environment and learning methods. Internal factors include difficulty in distinguishing letters, a tendency to read by spelling each letter, reading difficulties, weak reading comprehension, and low self-confidence when reading. External factors include minimal reading habits at home, limited parental support as children learn to read, excessive use of electronic devices, and limited access to reading materials. These factors make minimal reading at home and a small parental role in helping children learn to read the most significant causes. These findings indicate that improving children's reading ability depends not only on learning at school, but also on ongoing collaboration between teachers and parents to build regular reading habits.

Suggestion

Based on the study's findings, educators are advised to improve the quality of early reading instruction by implementing a variety of literacy activities, providing ongoing support to students experiencing reading difficulties, and using innovative and engaging teaching media to optimally develop students' reading interests and skills. Parents are also expected to foster reading habits at home by regularly helping children learn to read, providing age-appropriate books and materials, and limiting electronic device use to give children more time to practice reading. Furthermore, schools need to continuously improve literacy program implementation by creating a comfortable learning environment to help students develop reading habits and by increasing communication and collaboration with parents to support students' reading skill development. This study's findings are expected to serve as a reference for other researchers pursuing more in-depth research on reading difficulties by expanding the subject group, using different research methods, and evaluating the effectiveness of various literacy programs in developing elementary school students' early reading skills.

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