

Library Management in Improving Students' Reading Interest at SMP Jarinabi

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze library management in improving students' reading interest at SMP Jarinabi, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, Jambi Province. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research design. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation study. The informants consisted of the school principal, the head of the library, a teacher, and student representatives from Grades VII, VIII, and IX. The data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data credibility was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. The findings show that library management at SMP Jarinabi has been implemented through planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, although it remains simple and conventional. The library has supported students' reading interest through textbook procurement, borrowing services, morning literacy activities, classroom reading corners, reading competitions, and a relaxing reading corner. Students' reading interest has begun to develop, especially in completing assignments, finding references, and reviewing classroom materials. However, this interest is not yet evenly distributed and remains largely instrumental rather than autonomous. The main obstacles include limited non-textbook collections, the absence of full-time professional library staff, limited library space, manual administration, and restricted service hours due to the dense schedule of the integrated Islamic boarding school environment. This study concludes that improving students' reading interest requires more strategic library management through collection development, staff training, better space organization, flexible reading access, and consistent literacy programs*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy is a fundamental foundation for students' academic development, lifelong learning, and participation in social life (Hanemann, 2015; Dang & Chong, 2025; McKay, 2018). In the context of formal education, reading is not merely a mechanical activity of decoding written symbols, but a complex cognitive, affective, and social process through which learners construct meaning, acquire knowledge, evaluate information, and develop critical awareness. The importance of literacy is also strongly connected to the broader purpose of education in Indonesia, where national education is expected to develop students' potential, character, intelligence, and civilization (Madum & Daimah, 2024; Nurdin, 2015).

However, the literacy challenge in Indonesia remains significant. The PISA 2018 results showed that Indonesian students' reading performance was still below the OECD average, and the PISA 2022 country note reported that only about one quarter of Indonesian students reached at least Level 2 in reading proficiency (OECD, 2019, 2023). These findings indicate that strengthening reading literacy should remain a priority in school-level educational management.

Reading interest is one of the key psychological and behavioral factors that supports students' literacy development. Students who have strong reading interest tend to read more frequently, engage more deeply with texts, and develop broader knowledge through repeated exposure to print and other reading materials. Research has shown that reading motivation is related to the amount and breadth of students' reading activities (Neugebauer & Gilmour, 2020; Winberg et al., 2022; McGeown et al., 2016), while reading engagement contributes to comprehension growth and academic achievement (Guthrie et al., 2013).

A meta-analysis by Mol & Bus (2011) also found that print exposure is associated with oral language, reading comprehension, and academic achievement. Similarly, Petscher (2010) demonstrated a moderate relationship between students' attitudes toward reading and reading achievement. These studies suggest that reading interest is not a minor affective factor, but an important component in students' literacy development.

Nevertheless, reading interest does not develop automatically. It is shaped by the interaction between students' internal motivation and the external learning environment. Internal factors include curiosity, self-efficacy, reading confidence, enjoyment, and the perceived usefulness of reading (Gambrell, 2011; Morgan & Fuchs, 2007). External factors include access to books, teacher encouragement, family literacy practices, peer influence, library services, and the availability of attractive reading spaces (Merga & Roni, 2018; Webber et al., 2025).

Celik (2019) and Soomro et al. (2026) argued that reading experience contributes to vocabulary growth, general knowledge, and cognitive development, while Kavi et al. (2015) and Wilkinson et al. (2020) emphasized that access to interesting reading materials is essential in developing voluntary reading habits. Therefore, efforts to improve students' reading interest should not only focus on asking students to read, but also on creating a supportive literacy environment.

The school library is one of the most strategic institutional resources for developing such an environment. A school library should function as a learning resource center that provides reading materials, supports classroom learning, develops information literacy, and encourages students to read independently. The IFLA School Library Guidelines emphasize that school libraries should support literacy, reading promotion, inquiry learning, and access to information for all students (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA], 2015) (Ober, 2018; Magut, 2025; Zhang et al., 2019).

Previous studies have also shown that strong school library programs are positively associated with students' learning outcomes, reading engagement, and academic achievement (Lance & Kachel, 2018; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Todd, 2012). School libraries can provide safe, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating spaces where students can read, explore information, and develop learning autonomy (Merga, 2020a, 2020b).

However, the effectiveness of a school library depends greatly on how it is managed. Library management includes planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating library resources and services. Effective library management requires adequate book collections, relevant reading materials, professional staff, comfortable spaces, systematic services, and reading programs that are connected to students' needs.

Studies on school libraries have repeatedly emphasized that qualified library personnel, updated collections, and active collaboration between librarians and teachers are important factors in making school libraries effective (Kachel & Lance, 2013; Lance & Kachel, 2018; Merga, 2021; Small et al., 2010). In the Indonesian context, the National Library Regulation Number 4 of

2024 also states that school libraries must be developed according to standards that cover collections, facilities, services, personnel, management, and library development (Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2024). This shows that library management is not merely an administrative task, but a strategic educational process.

Many school libraries still face structural and operational limitations. Common problems include limited collections, outdated books, insufficient non-textbook reading materials, lack of professional librarians, narrow library rooms, limited-service hours, and low student participation. These problems may reduce students' willingness to visit the library and weaken the library's role in developing reading interest. Research in Indonesia has shown that school libraries can support students' reading interest when they are optimized through reading programs, reading corners, attractive collections, and teacher involvement (Alpian & Ruwaida, 2022; Septiani & Aslam, 2022).

Other studies also indicate that the availability of library collections and the quality of library services influence students' reading interest (Taib et al., 2022). Therefore, improving students' reading interest requires not only literacy campaigns, but also better library governance. The role of teachers is also important in connecting students with library resources. Teachers can guide students to use library materials, design reading-based assignments, encourage students to search for references, and integrate library use into classroom learning. When teachers actively involve the library in the learning process, students are more likely to perceive the library as relevant to their academic needs.

However, excessive dependence on teacher-assigned reading may also limit the development of intrinsic reading motivation if students visit the library only to complete assignments or prepare for examinations. This distinction is important because strong literacy culture should ideally move students from extrinsic, task-based reading toward autonomous and voluntary reading.

The issue becomes more complex in schools located within Islamic boarding school environments. In such institutions, students often participate in both formal school learning and pesantren-based religious activities (Sholihah et al., 2025; Susanto et al., 2025; Mustain & Bakar, 2025; Shiddiqi & Kibtiyah, 2026; Suryanto et al., 2020). This dual educational structure can provide a strong spiritual and moral foundation for literacy, especially because reading, learning, and seeking knowledge occupy an important place in Islamic educational tradition. At the same time, dense daily schedules may reduce students' free time to visit the library, read independently, or participate in extended literacy activities.

Thus, library management in pesantren-based schools needs to be adaptive, realistic, and sensitive to students' routines. Short but consistent reading activities, classroom reading corners, teacher-supported library visits, and flexible access to books may be more suitable than programs that require long and rigid reading sessions.

SMP Jarinabi, located in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, Jambi Province, provides an important context for examining this issue. Preliminary observations and interview data indicate that the school already has a library and has implemented several efforts to improve students' reading interest, including morning literacy activities, classroom reading corners, book borrowing services, and a relaxing reading corner.

However, the library still faces several limitations, such as limited non-textbook collections, insufficient professional library staff, limited room capacity, manual administration, and restricted library visiting hours due to the students' dense pesantren activities. These conditions show that the problem of students' reading interest is not only related to students' personal motivation, but also to the quality of library management and the structural context of the school.

To analyze this phenomenon, this study draws on two theoretical perspectives: the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). RBV explains that

organizational performance depends on how internal resources are managed, organized, and utilized to create value (Lubis, 2022; Park et al., 2017; Malhotra et al., 2025). In the context of school libraries, RBV is useful for understanding how limited resources, such as small rooms, limited collections, and limited staff, can still be optimized through creative management strategies.

Meanwhile, TPB explains that behavior is influenced by intention, which is shaped by attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. TPB is relevant for analyzing students' reading behavior because students may have positive attitudes toward reading and receive encouragement from teachers, but their actual reading behavior may still be constrained by limited access, unattractive collections, uncomfortable spaces, or insufficient time.

Although previous studies have discussed the relationship between school libraries and students' reading interest, limited attention has been given to library management in rural Islamic boarding school-based junior high schools. Most existing studies focus on general school libraries, elementary school literacy programs, or quantitative relationships between library services and reading interest (Pakistyaningsih et al., 2019; Merga, 2019).

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how library management is implemented in a pesantren-based school context, how students' reading interest develops through library programs, and what structural and operational constraints limit the effectiveness of the library. The findings are expected to contribute to the field of Islamic Education Management by showing how school libraries can be managed as strategic literacy resources within institutions that integrate formal schooling and pesantren-based education.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze library management in improving students' reading interest at SMP Jarinabi, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, Jambi Province. Specifically, this study seeks to describe the implementation of library management functions, identify students' reading interest patterns, and examine the obstacles faced by the library in supporting students' literacy development. By focusing on the interaction between library management, reading interest, and the pesantren-based school context, this study is expected to provide practical input for school leaders, library managers, teachers, and foundations in strengthening school literacy culture.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research design. This approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth, holistic, and contextual understanding of library management practices in improving students' reading interest at SMP Jarinabi, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, Jambi Province. The qualitative design enabled the researchers to explore the implementation of library management functions, students' reading behavior, and the structural and operational constraints faced by the school library. The research was conducted at SMP Jarinabi, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, Jambi Province. The location was selected purposively because the school library operates within an integrated Islamic boarding school environment, which has distinctive managerial and time-allocation characteristics. Field data collection was carried out from May to August 2025. The informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, supported by snowball sampling when additional information was required. The key informants consisted of the school principal, the head of the library, teachers, and student representatives from Grades VII, VIII, and IX. These informants were selected because they were directly involved in, or had relevant experience with, the planning, implementation, use, and evaluation of library services.

Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation study. Observation was conducted to examine the physical condition of the library, the arrangement of collections, service activities, student visits, and students' reading behavior in the library. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore informants' perceptions regarding library planning, organization, service implementation,

supervision, students' reading interest, and obstacles in library management. Documentation study was conducted by examining relevant school and library documents, including the organizational structure of the library, book inventory records, visitor logs, borrowing records, literacy program documents, and photographic documentation of library activities. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data condensation stage, the researchers selected, simplified, and categorized information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. In the data display stage, the data were organized into descriptive narratives based on the main themes of the study, namely library management functions, students' reading interest, and library management constraints. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings from the collected data. To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the school principal, head of the library, teachers, and students. Technique triangulation was carried out by comparing interview data with observation results and documentary evidence. Through this process, the validity of the data was strengthened and the findings were expected to accurately reflect the actual condition of library management at SMP Jarinabi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study based on interviews with the school principal, the head of the library, a teacher, and student representatives from Grades VII, VIII, and IX. The findings are organized according to the main focus of the study, namely the implementation of library management, the strategies used to improve students' reading interest, the condition of students' reading interest, and the obstacles faced in library management at SMP Jarinabi.

The Position of the Library in Supporting School Literacy

The findings indicate that the library at SMP Jarinabi is understood by school stakeholders as an important academic facility that supports the development of students' knowledge and literacy. The school principal viewed the library not merely as a room for storing books, but as one of the indicators of school quality and educational progress. He stated:

"The library is certainly one of the sources of knowledge in the school. Whether or not a school is progressing can also be measured from the quality of its library."

This statement shows that the school principal recognizes the strategic function of the library in supporting the vision of the school. The library is expected to contribute to the improvement of students' human resources and to support the broader educational mission of SMP Jarinabi as an institution under the Jarinabi Islamic boarding school foundation. The principal further emphasized that the library should be aligned with the school's vision and mission:

"It is appropriate because improving students' reading interest or improving human resources must be supported by a library that works in synergy with the vision and mission of the Islamic boarding school as the main foundation of Jarinabi."

This finding shows that the library has an institutional role in strengthening the learning culture of the school. However, the role of the library is still developing. The principal acknowledged that simple efforts have begun to encourage students' reading enthusiasm, although the impact is still limited to certain groups of students. Therefore, the library at SMP Jarinabi can be described as having strategic potential, but its actual function still requires stronger management, better resources, and more systematic literacy programs.

Collaborative Management among the Principal, Library Staff, and Teachers

Library management at SMP Jarinabi involves cooperation among the principal, library staff, and teachers. The principal stated that cooperation is essential because library management cannot be carried out by one person alone. He explained:

"There must be cooperation in managing the library, and there are many indicators in managing it. The staff who manage the library must be connected to one another."

This statement reflects the need for institutional collaboration in library management. The library is not only the responsibility of the head of the library, but also requires policy support from the principal and instructional support from teachers. The head of the library also confirmed that teachers play an active role in directing students to use the library, especially when learning activities require additional references. She stated:

"Usually students come to the library during break time or when there is an assignment from the teacher. Teachers are also quite active in directing students to the library, especially when learning activities require additional references."

From this finding, it can be seen that teachers function as important mediators between students and the library. Students do not always come to the library because of personal reading motivation; in many cases, their visits are initiated by teachers' instructions or classroom assignments. This means that the role of teachers is highly influential in introducing students to library resources. However, this also indicates that students' independent reading habits have not yet fully developed. The library is still often used as a supporting facility for completing school tasks rather than as a space for voluntary reading.

Planning of Library Programs Based on School Context

The planning of library programs at SMP Jarinabi is carried out by considering the specific context of the school. Since the school is located within an Islamic boarding school environment, students have dense schedules that include formal school activities and religious boarding school activities. This condition affects the design of library programs. The head of the library explained:

"In planning library programs, I usually start by looking at the real condition in the field. The Jarinabi library is located in a pesantren environment, so students' activities are quite dense with school and religious activities."

This statement shows that library planning is contextual and adaptive. The head of the library does not design programs that are too complex or demanding because such programs may not be suitable for students' daily routines. Instead, the library prioritizes simple, light, and consistent programs that can slowly build students' reading habits. She further stated:

"This condition makes me design programs that are realistic and do not burden students too much, but can still develop reading habits."

The planning process also considers the availability of resources. The library collection is still dominated by textbooks purchased through BOS funds. Therefore, textbook procurement becomes the main priority because textbooks are directly needed for classroom learning. The head of the library explained:

"Our collection has mostly been dominated by textbooks purchased from BOS funds every year. Therefore, when preparing the plan, I always prioritize the procurement of new textbooks so that students still have proper books that are easy to use in learning."

After fulfilling basic learning needs, the library attempts to gradually plan the procurement of general reading books. These include children's stories, motivational books, popular knowledge books, and light reading materials that are considered more attractive to students. This indicates that the library manager is aware that reading interest cannot be developed through textbooks alone. Students also need recreational and inspirational reading materials that are closer to their daily lives and interests.

An important finding in this aspect is that the planning process does not only focus on book procurement, but also on student characteristics. The head of the library stated:

"The students at SMP Jarinabi, because they live in a pesantren environment, actually have quite high curiosity, but they need reading materials that are close to their daily lives."

This statement is significant because it reveals that the problem of low reading interest is not simply caused by students' unwillingness to read. Rather, it is also related to the availability and relevance of reading materials. If the library provides books that are more connected to students' experiences, values, and interests, the possibility of increasing students' reading engagement becomes greater.

Organization and Division of Library Tasks

The organizational structure of the library at SMP Jarinabi is simple due to limited human resources. The library is managed by the head of the library with the assistance of one staff member. The head of the library explained:

"The task structure of the Jarinabi library is made as simple as possible because our human resources are limited. The library is currently managed by me as the head of the library and one staff member who helps with daily technical activities."

The division of tasks is clear although it is not complex. The head of the library is responsible for planning, administration, annual reporting, communication with the foundation and the school, book procurement planning, library regulations, and reading interest programs. Meanwhile, the staff member assists with technical work, including recording borrowing and returning books, arranging bookshelves, cleaning the library room, identifying damaged or lost books, and assisting students when they visit the library.

This finding indicates that the library has a basic organizational system. However, the system still depends heavily on a small number of personnel. The absence of a full-time professional librarian limits the development of more advanced library services, such as digital cataloging, systematic collection classification, user education, reading guidance, and data-based literacy program evaluation.

The principal also identified human resources as one of the main obstacles in library management. He stated:

"The obstacle is the library staff itself, because most of them are not from a library background. There is also limited training from related parties, and the books needed are still lacking."

This statement confirms that the issue of library management is not only related to facilities and book collections, but also to staff competence and professional development. Without sufficient training and professional library personnel, the library tends to operate at a basic administrative level. As a result, innovation in services and literacy programs becomes difficult to sustain.

Implementation of Library Services and Reading Programs

The implementation of library services at SMP Jarinabi includes book arrangement, book borrowing and returning services, manual recording, daily cleanliness maintenance, and student reading activities. The head of the library stated:

"The management of the library at SMP Jarinabi has been running quite well, although it is still simple. We try to arrange the book collections neatly, record incoming and outgoing books, and serve borrowing according to the schedule."

The library service is still conventional and manual, but it continues to function as a supporting facility for students' learning activities. Most students come to the library during

break time or when they receive assignments from teachers. This shows that the library is actively used, although its use is still strongly related to academic needs.

Several programs have been implemented to encourage students to read. These include morning literacy activities, classroom reading corners, reading together, poetry reading competitions, book summary writing competitions, motivational reading quotes, and a relaxing reading corner in the library. The head of the library explained:

"Every morning before the lesson begins, there is a literacy activity, and sometimes teachers invite students to read in the library. We also hold simple activities such as poetry reading competitions, creating reading corners in classrooms, and reading together in turns."

The morning literacy activity is one of the most consistent programs. Students are encouraged to read for approximately 10–15 minutes before lessons begin. Although the duration is short, this program has an important function in introducing reading as a daily routine. The head of the library stated:

"One of the routine programs we carry out is reading before lessons begin. The reading duration is only around 10–15 minutes, but it is enough to help students get used to opening books every day."

This finding indicates that the school uses a gradual habituation strategy. Instead of forcing students to read for long periods, the school introduces reading through short and repeated activities. This approach is suitable for the context of SMP Jarinabi, where students' schedules are already dense due to school and pesantren activities.

Another important program is the creation of a relaxing reading corner. The head of the library explained:

"We also created a relaxing reading corner in one part of the room with mats and sitting pillows so that students can read more comfortably and casually."

The reading corner is meaningful because it attempts to change students' perception of the library. A conventional library can sometimes be perceived as rigid and formal. By creating a more relaxed and comfortable space, the library tries to make reading feel more enjoyable. The teacher also supported this idea by saying:

"I hope the relaxing reading corner that already exists can make students more comfortable reading and studying in the library."

The implementation of these programs shows that the library has made efforts to move beyond a passive book-storage function. The library is gradually being developed as a learning space that supports reading, discussion, and student engagement. However, because the programs are still simple and the resources are limited, their impact on students' reading interest remains uneven.

Supervision and Evaluation of Library Activities

Supervision is carried out regularly by the head of the library. The supervision process includes checking daily library services, ensuring books are arranged properly, monitoring borrowing records, observing student use of the library, and discussing problems with the library staff. The head of the library stated:

"For supervision, I do it routinely every day. I check library services, make sure the books are well arranged, look at borrowing records, and observe how students use the library."

This indicates that supervision is conducted in a practical and direct manner. The head of the library observes the daily operation of the library and identifies immediate problems that need to be addressed. The supervision is not yet based on a sophisticated digital system, but it is carried out consistently through manual observation and administrative records. Evaluation is usually conducted at the end of the semester or the end of the year. The evaluation includes

student visit numbers, book borrowing levels, textbook conditions, and the effectiveness of programs that have been implemented. The head of the library explained:

"For evaluation, I usually do it at the end of the semester or at the end of the year. This evaluation includes the number of student visits, the level of book borrowing, the condition of textbooks, and the effectiveness of the programs that have been implemented."

This finding shows that the library has begun to use basic data to assess its services. For example, when certain books are rarely borrowed, the library manager tries to understand whether the books are unattractive or no longer relevant to students' needs. This practice is important because it shows that evaluation is not only administrative, but also reflective. The library manager attempts to interpret students' reading patterns as input for future improvement.

The results of evaluation are then reported to the foundation and the school. The head of the library stated:

"The evaluation results are then included in the library report submitted to the foundation and the school. From the report, suggestions or new decisions usually appear to improve library services in the following year."

Although the evaluation system remains simple, it provides a basis for future planning. This means that library management at SMP Jarinabi already follows a basic management cycle: planning, implementation, supervision, evaluation, and improvement. However, the cycle needs to be strengthened through more systematic documentation, clearer indicators, and more specific follow-up actions.

Students' Reading Interest and Library Visit Patterns

The findings show that students' reading interest at SMP Jarinabi has begun to grow, but it is not yet evenly distributed. The head of the library described students' reading interest as developing gradually:

"Students' reading interest at SMP Jarinabi has begun to grow, although it is not yet evenly distributed. Some students diligently borrow books and read in their free time, especially before exams or when they receive assignments."

This statement indicates that students' reading interest exists, but much of it is still driven by academic demands. Students are more likely to visit the library when they need to complete assignments, prepare for exams, or find references for lessons. This pattern is supported by student interviews.

A Grade VII student stated:

"I usually visit once a week, usually during break time."

A Grade VIII student said:

"I usually visit twice a week to read books and look for assignment references."

Meanwhile, a Grade IX student explained:

"I visit one to three times a week, depending on how many assignments are given by the teachers."

These three responses show different levels of library use. The Grade VII student visits once a week, the Grade VIII student visits twice a week, and the Grade IX student visits one to three times a week depending on assignments. The variation suggests that library visits are influenced by grade level, learning needs, and the number of teacher assignments. The Grade IX student's statement is particularly important because it shows that library visits are still task-dependent. When assignments increase, visits also increase. When assignments decrease, library use may also decline.

This finding confirms that students' reading interest is still partly instrumental. Reading is viewed as useful for completing school tasks and understanding lessons. However, it has not fully become a personal habit or a form of reading for pleasure. The head of the library also observed that some students still do not visit the library unless they have a specific purpose:

"There are still some students who are not used to coming to the library without a particular need. They sometimes prefer gathering with friends or joining pesantren activities."

This shows that the library competes with other student activities, including social interaction and pesantren routines. Therefore, increasing students' reading interest requires not only more books, but also more attractive programs, better time allocation, and a reading environment that students perceive as enjoyable.

The Academic Function of the Library for Students

Although students' reading interest is not yet fully autonomous, the library has contributed positively to their learning. Students acknowledged that reading in the library helps them complete assignments, understand lessons, and study independently. A Grade VII student stated:

"It is quite helpful, especially when I am looking for materials to complete school assignments."

A Grade VIII student said:

"Reading textbooks in the library helps me better understand the material taught in class."

A Grade IX student also emphasized the role of the library in independent learning:

"Reading in the library really helps me study independently and review the lessons that have been taught in class."

These statements show that students perceive the library as academically useful. The library functions as a place where students can access learning materials and reinforce classroom instruction. In this sense, the library already supports the formal learning process. However, the findings also show that students mostly associate the library with textbooks, assignments, and school subjects. This means that the library's role as a space for broader literacy development, imagination, personal enrichment, and recreational reading still needs to be strengthened.

The teacher also confirmed that the library supports learning activities, but its role is not yet optimal because the book collection is incomplete. She stated:

"The library has played a role in supporting learning activities. However, the book collection is still incomplete, so it cannot fully meet students' learning needs."

This finding suggests that the academic function of the library is recognized by both teachers and students. However, the limitation of book collections prevents the library from fully supporting diverse learning needs. If the library collection is expanded, especially with books beyond textbooks, the library may have a stronger role in developing students' broader reading culture.

Limitations of Book Collections as a Major Barrier

One of the most dominant findings in this study is the limited variety of library collections. The library collection is still dominated by textbooks, while non-textbook reading materials remain limited. This issue was mentioned by the principal, the head of the library, the teacher, and students, indicating that it is a central problem in library management.

The principal stated:

"The books needed are still lacking."

The head of the library provided a more specific explanation:

"The most common obstacles we face are the limited collection of non-textbook reading materials and the library room that is not yet spacious."

The teacher also confirmed this limitation:

"The book collection is still incomplete, so it cannot fully meet students' learning needs."

Student responses also show that the lack of attractive reading materials affects their interest in visiting the library. A Grade VII student stated:

"There are some interesting books, but I think there are still not enough illustrated story books to make reading more enjoyable."

A Grade VIII student said:

"The textbooks in the library are quite suitable for learning needs, but the general knowledge books are still not updated."

A Grade IX student added:

"Some books are good and suitable for our needs, but I think motivational education books are still lacking."

These statements reveal a clear pattern: students do not reject reading, but they need more diverse and relevant reading materials. Grade VII students tend to expect illustrated story books, Grade VIII students need updated general knowledge books, and Grade IX students are interested in motivational and educational books. This suggests that collection development should consider students' age, grade level, reading preferences, and learning needs.

The limitation of collections also explains why students may feel bored with the library. A Grade VIII student stated:

"Sometimes I feel bored because the book collection in the library is still the same, so it is less interesting to read repeatedly."

This statement is important because it indicates that reading interest is closely related to collection renewal. When students repeatedly encounter the same books, their motivation to revisit the library decreases. Therefore, collection development should not only focus on quantity, but also on novelty, variety, relevance, and attractiveness.

Physical Space, Comfort, and Library Atmosphere

The physical condition of the library also influences students' interest in reading. The head of the library stated that the library room is not yet spacious and is still combined with another learning space. This condition limits the library's ability to accommodate many students at the same time. She explained:

"The room is still combined with another learning space, so it is not flexible for activities involving many students."

The teacher also mentioned the same issue:

"The obstacles include book arrangement that is not yet neat, the library room that is still combined with a classroom, and the limited book collection."

Students' responses show that comfort is an important factor in encouraging them to read. A Grade VII student said that the library is "quite comfortable" because it is clean, quiet, and supportive for reading. A Grade VIII student also said that the library is quite comfortable because there is a place to sit, but she added that the book arrangement is still not neat. She stated:

"It is quite comfortable because there is already a place to sit and read books, but it is a little less comfortable because the book arrangement is still not neat."

A Grade IX student provided a more positive response regarding comfort:

"I feel more comfortable reading in the library because the atmosphere is cooler than in the classroom, and the books I need are usually available."

These findings show that the library atmosphere already has some positive aspects, such as cleanliness, quietness, seating availability, and a cooler environment. However, students still expect improvements in room arrangement, book organization, and physical facilities. A Grade VIII student suggested that an air conditioner would make the library more comfortable:

"The book collection should be added, and if possible, an air conditioner should be provided so that the atmosphere becomes more comfortable."

Therefore, comfort is not a minor issue in library management. For students, a comfortable room can increase their willingness to stay longer, read more calmly, and return to the library more often. The existing relaxing reading corner is a good initial strategy, but it needs to be supported by better spatial arrangement and improved facilities.

Time Constraints and the Pesantren-Based School Context

Another important obstacle is limited time. SMP Jarinabi operates within an integrated Islamic boarding school environment, where students participate in both formal education and pesantren activities. This condition affects students' opportunity to visit the library. The head of the library stated:

"The library usually only opens until noon because after that it is used for pesantren activities."

The library operates from 07.30 to 12.00 from Monday to Saturday. The head of the library explained:

"We also arrange library operational hours from 07.30 to 12.00 every Monday to Saturday. With this schedule, students can visit before lessons begin or after certain lessons finish earlier."

Although this schedule allows some access, it remains limited because students have many other activities. A Grade IX student specifically identified limited break time as a reason for not reading longer in the library:

"One of the obstacles is that break time is not long enough, so I cannot read for too long in the library."

This finding is significant because it shows that reading interest cannot be separated from time availability. Even when students are interested in reading, they may not have enough time to visit the library or stay there for a longer period. In the context of a pesantren-based school, library management must therefore consider more flexible access strategies. For example, reading corners in classrooms, mobile book services, rotating book boxes, or scheduled reading sessions may help overcome limited library access.

Students' Expectations for Library Improvement

Students expressed several expectations that can be used as important input for library development. Their expectations include the addition of new story books, illustrated books, updated general knowledge books, motivational education books, reading-together activities, more comfortable facilities, neater book arrangement, and weekly book recommendations.

A Grade VII student stated:

"If the library has new story books and reading-together activities, I will definitely come more often."

A Grade VIII student emphasized the need for additional collections and better facilities:

"The book collection should be added, and if possible, an air conditioner should be provided so that the atmosphere becomes more comfortable."

A Grade IX student suggested a more systematic reading promotion strategy:

"It would be better if the library added the latest knowledge books or made weekly book recommendation lists so that students become more interested in reading."

These expectations show that students have clear ideas about what would make the library more attractive. Their suggestions are practical and directly related to the problems they experience: limited collections, lack of novelty, comfort issues, and the need for reading guidance. The suggestion to create weekly book recommendations is particularly useful because it can help students discover books more easily and reduce confusion when choosing reading materials.

These findings also indicate that students' reading interest can be developed if the library responds to their preferences. Students are more likely to visit the library when they find books that match their age, interests, and learning needs. Therefore, student voice should be considered in planning future library programs and collection development.

The findings indicate that library management at SMP Jarinabi has supported students' reading interest, although its impact remains limited. The library has implemented basic management functions through book arrangement, borrowing services, reading corners, literacy activities, and simple evaluation. However, the management system is still conventional and strongly affected by limited collections, limited space, lack of professional library staff, and restricted visiting time. This confirms Merga's (2022) argument that school libraries are often recognized as important literacy resources, but their role is not always fully integrated into school-level literacy planning. Similarly, Merga & Ferguson (2021) emphasize that the role of school librarians in supporting reading for pleasure must be institutionally recognized, not treated merely as an administrative function.

The role of collaboration between the principal, teachers, and library staff is also central. The findings show that students often visit the library because of teacher direction or assignments. This supports Srirahayu et al. (2021), who found that school literacy programs require cooperation among librarians, teachers, principals, and the school community. However, the collaboration at SMP Jarinabi still needs to move from occasional support to a more systematic literacy strategy. Irawati et al. (2025) also argue that Indonesian school librarians can become agents of reading culture when they receive support from school management and when teachers model reading behavior.

Students' reading interest at SMP Jarinabi has begun to grow, but it is still mostly instrumental. Students read mainly to complete assignments, find references, or prepare for examinations. This finding is consistent with Merke et al. (2024), who argue that silent reading activities are more effective when supported by structured guidance, suitable book selection, and follow-up activities. Bus et al. (2024) also emphasize that independent reading should not only provide time to read, but also build students' interest and engagement. Therefore, the 10–15-minute reading activity at SMP Jarinabi is useful, but it needs to be strengthened through book discussions, reading journals, peer recommendations, and teacher feedback.

The limited availability of non-textbook collections is one of the strongest barriers to reading interest. Students expect more illustrated story books, motivational books, updated general knowledge books, and books that are closer to their interests. This finding supports Taib et al. (2022), who found that collection availability and library service quality influence students' reading interest. Septiani and Aslam (2022) also show that library utilization can foster reading interest when library resources are relevant to students' learning needs. Paranoan et al. (2024) further demonstrate that visually attractive reading materials, such as picture story books, can increase students' reading interest because they make reading more enjoyable and accessible. Thus, SMP Jarinabi needs to balance textbook procurement with recreational, inspirational, and age-appropriate reading materials.

The reading corner is a positive strategy because it makes the library feel more relaxed and student-friendly. This is in line with Septiana & Saufa (2024), who found that reading corners

can increase students' reading interest when they are attractive, accessible, and regularly used. Athiyallah et al. (2024) also found that reading corners, literacy competitions, fiction books, reading ambassadors, and user-oriented services are effective library strategies for increasing students' reading interest. However, the reading corner at SMP Jarinabi should not remain only a physical facility. It should be supported by book rotation, weekly book recommendations, reading challenges, and student involvement in choosing books.

The findings also show that comfort influences students' willingness to read. Students mentioned cleanliness, quietness, seating, book arrangement, and room temperature as important factors. This supports Srirahayu et al. (2021), who found that service quality and comfort are major reasons why digital native users choose to use libraries. Loh & Binny (2025) similarly show that school libraries can support students' wellbeing when they provide comfortable, peaceful, and welcoming spaces. Webber et al. (2025) also argue that school librarians contribute not only to reading development, but also to student autonomy, inclusion, and personal growth. Therefore, improving the library atmosphere is not a cosmetic issue; it is part of strengthening students' reading engagement.

The pesantren-based school context creates a specific challenge. Students have dense schedules because they follow both formal school learning and religious boarding school activities. As a result, library access is limited. Chen & MacLeod (2021) show that digital tools can support adolescents' reading when used with proper guidance, while Sun, Loh, and Nie (2021) remind that students may still prefer print reading even when digital access is available. Therefore, SMP Jarinabi should not replace printed books with digital resources, but combine both. Simple digital catalogues, QR-based reading lists, classroom book boxes, and rotating reading materials can help students access books despite limited library hours.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that library management at SMP Jarinabi has contributed to improving students' reading interest, although its implementation remains simple and conventional. The library has carried out basic management functions through planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, as reflected in textbook procurement, manual borrowing services, reading corners, morning literacy activities, and teacher-supported library visits. Students' reading interest has begun to develop, particularly in relation to completing assignments, finding references, and reviewing classroom materials; however, this interest has not yet been evenly distributed and remains largely instrumental rather than fully autonomous. The main obstacles include limited non-textbook collections, the absence of full-time professional library staff, limited library space, manual administration, and restricted service hours due to the dense schedule of the integrated Islamic boarding school environment. Therefore, improving students' reading interest requires more strategic library management through collection development, better library space organization, staff training, flexible reading access, and consistent literacy programs that can transform the library into a more active, attractive, and student-centered learning resource center.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, several suggestions can be proposed. First, the school and foundation should strengthen library management by allocating more attention to collection development, especially non-textbook reading materials such as story books, motivational books, popular science books, religious literacy materials, and updated general knowledge books that are relevant to students' interests. Second, the library staff should receive training in basic library management, including collection organization, borrowing administration, reading promotion, and simple digital cataloging, so that library services can become more systematic and attractive. Third, the school should improve the physical condition of the library by arranging books more neatly, expanding reading space when possible, and maintaining a comfortable reading corner to encourage students to spend more time reading. Fourth, teachers should be more actively involved in integrating library use into learning activities through reading-based assignments,

book reviews, reading journals, and regular library visits. Finally, because SMP Jarinabi is located within an integrated Islamic boarding school environment, the school should consider more flexible reading access, such as classroom reading corners, rotating book boxes, weekly book recommendations, or limited digital reading resources, so that students can continue reading despite their dense academic and pesantren schedules.

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