The Viewpoints: Determination of Elementary School Teacher's Preference and Criteria for Selecting Children's Books

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A B S T R A K

Permasalahan mengenai literasi membaca merupakan topik yang sering muncul dalam dunia pendidikan Indonesia. Padahal titik permasalahan utama dalam hal ini bukan pada kegiatan literasinya melainkan pada materi yang dibaca oleh anak-anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana guru di sekolah dasar memilih bahan bacaan bagi murid mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi pada empat sekolah dasar dengan titik lokasi yang berbeda-beda. Sumber utama dari penelitian ini adalah hasil wawancara dan observasi yang dilakukan paga guru kelas besar (4, 5, dan 6). Hal menarik yang ditemukan dalam penelitian ini adalah guru sekolah dasar melakukan pemilihan bahan bacaan sastra anak berdasarkan pada unsur sastra dan keterkaitannya dengan materi ajar yang dibahas dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia. Untuk lebih lengkap, pemaparan tersebut diungkap dalam bagian pembahasan pada tulisan ini. Dalam penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa guru sekolah dasar memilih bahan bacaan dari segi intrinsik karya dan tidak ada penilaian secara komprehensif dalam memilih bahan bacaan.

A B S T R A C T

The issue of reading literacy is a frequently discussed topic in the Indonesian education system. However, the main problem does not lie in the literacy activities themselves but rather in the reading materials provided for children. This research aims to analyze how elementary school teachers choose reading materials for their students. It utilizes a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data collection involves observation, interviews, and documentation in four different elementary schools. The primary sources of this research are the interviews and observations conducted with teachers of upper-grade classes (grades 4, 5, and 6). An interesting finding in this research is that elementary school teachers select children's literature based on literary elements and its relevance to the Indonesian language teaching materials. For a more comprehensive explanation, this aspect is further discussed in the article. In conclusion, elementary school teachers choose reading materials based on the intrinsic elements of the work, and there is no comprehensive assessment in the selection process.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is one of the important skills that enable a person to engage in lifelong learning. One must develop literacy skills to learn various things to support life skills. This literacy skill must be initiated since humans are in the childhood phase. Children are important for the acquisition of reading habits and skills, such as reading comprehension, correct and fluent use of language, listening comprehension, and oral and written expression (Kinslow et al., 2018; Lampropoulos et al., 2019). Reading habits acquired by children at a young age will have a significant impact on their age. Cultivating a positive attitude toward books for children from the time they are in elementary school is the first and most important step in forming reading habits. Literacy awareness that has developed since they were in elementary school will affect the literacy skills they acquire at the next level of education (Broce et al., 2019; Powell & Diamond, 2012). Through good literacy skills, children will get many interesting experiences. They can develop observation skills. In addition, they will also understand that what they read can be written and what is written can be read to help them be prepared to improve their reading and writing skills in the future. At school, this literacy

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activity will be related to media known as children's literature (Rubini et al., 2018; Vaportzis et al., 2017). Children's literature is defined as a set of products that enrich the intellectual and emotional world of children through elements of visual arts and linguistics according to their level of development from birth to adolescence.

Children's literature has an important role in elementary school education. Children's literature is a literary work that contains many didactic values to develop positive attitudes and knowledge in children. Children's literature can refer to two things. First, children's literature is a literary work written by children and intended for children's readers. Second, children's literature can also be a literary work written by adults and intended for children (Al Mamun et al., 2022; Payu et al., 2022). Broadly speaking, from these two definitions, children's literature is a work of literature that is suitable for children to read and their point of view is within the scope of the world of children. As stated by previous study that children's reading is a book whose point of view is in the minds of children (Mcgeown et al., 2016).

In addition, there are also several studies that mention the same thing. For example, the research conducted critically analyzed five children's literature readings which were the object (Van Hooren & De Ste Croix, 2020). The five readings are *Ketulusan Hati Ni Kembang Arum, Putri Ladang, Nyi Mas Kanti, Putri Nilam Cayo,* and *Lukisan Jiwa Dewi Sinarah Bulan*. The results of her research stated that the five children's readings were not suitable for children to read because the themes, story content, stiles used, characters, and illustrations contained taboos in children's literature. Another research was conducted was found that several folk tales were not suitable for children to consume (Triwikromo, 2004). In his research, he highlights the characterization of women in several children's stories. In this study, it was found that female characters were burdened by the existence of beauty myths, cursed characters, and experienced violence.

Ensuring that children read books featuring age-appropriate issues or problems is crucial for their holistic development. Research consistently underscores the significance or tailoring literary content to align with a child's cognitive, emotional, and social readiness. Exposure to material that resonates with their developmental stages fosters a deeper understanding of the world, nurtures critical thinking skill, and promotes emotional intelligence (Bartan, 2018; Wahyuningsih et al., 2020). When children encounter literature that addresses themes and challenges relevant to their age group, they are better equipped tom comprehend and process information effectively. Furthermore, age-appropriate content facilitates the development empathy, allowing children to connect with characters and situation in a meaningful way. This connection contributes to the cultivation of social skills and broader perspective on the diversity of human experiences (Kathy et al., 2022; Saenab et al., 2022).

Conversely, exposing children to books that surpass their developmental readiness can lead to various issues. Cognitive dissonance may arise when confronted with complex concept beyond their gasp hindering optimal learning can comprehension. Emotional distress can result from exposure to themes or problems for which they are not emotionally prepared, potentially causing anxiety or confusion. In essence, the careful selection of reading materials by parents, educators, and caregivers is paramount. By curating literature that is age appropriate, adults can provide a positive and enriching literary experience that supports a childs overall growth and well-being. This approach recognizes the pivotal role literature plays in shaping a child's worldview and facilitating a healthy and harmonious transition through the various stages of their development (Hui et al., 2020; Kucirkova, 2019)

Based on these data, this raises the importance of selecting books at the elementary school level as the first formal educational institution for children. Many studies have explored how children select books from their perspectives. Some studies indicate that children generally choose books based on their gegnre. From the research conducted, it is commonly observed that children have a preference for books in the fiction genre (Awais & Ameen, 2013). For instance, a study with preschool and kindergarten-aged children founs that they tend to prefer fiction books over informative ones. However, there are also studies suggesting that children might actually prefer informative books (Mohr, 2003, 2006). A study with kindergarten-aged children showed a preference for informational texts over fiction. Another study with first-grade children also observed a tendency for them to choose informative books. The differences in these research findings lead to the conclusion that further studies are needed to fully understand the types of book children prefer.

Conducting through research on teacher preference in selecting reading material for children is imperative, as the teacher's perspective holds significant influence and effectiveness in shaping educational experiences. Teachers, being educational facilitators, possess a nuanced understanding if students' developmental stages, learning styles, and classroom dynamics (Marchetti & Cullen, 2015; Masdoki et al., 2021). Their insight into the appropriateness of reading materials can contributes significantly to creating an engaging and affective learning environment. Investigating teacher preference will not only enhance the quality of educational resources but also promote a more tailored and impactful approach to fostering alive for reading among children. The preferences of the books used and the way in which the books are presented by the teacher are crucial points in terms of the skills that will be imparted to children. It is

important for teachers to have knowledge about the contents of children's books that will be given to students (Awais & Ameen, 2013; Malik, 2018).

The factors that influence educators' choices in educational materials, we aim to gain valuable insights into the pedagogical considerations that shape the selection process (Hamadi et al., 2021; Thompson, 2011). Understanding teachers' preferences is paramount in optimizing the alignment between reading materials and the diverse learning needs of students. This research is of paramount importance as it addresses a critical gap in current knowledge, offering a nuanced understanding of the decision-making processes undertaken by educators. The findings will not only contribute to the enhancement of classroom practices but will also serve as a foundation for the development of tailored strategies that foster a love for literature and effective learning outcomes among children (Peters et al., 2022; Undheim & Jernes, 2020). By uncovering the rationale behind teachers' choices, this research aims to provide valuable guidance for educational stakeholders, curriculum developers, and policymakers in creating an enriched and purposeful literary environment within classrooms.

Similar research has been carried out in several countries, for example, the research conducted by previous study reveals that there are two different criteria in the selection of books for children by elementary school teachers and book editors (Ika Febriandari, 2019). This research, which was conducted at Hunterdon Country elementary school, New Jersey, United States of America, obtained the final result that elementary school teachers placed more importance on readability, suitability with the curriculum, children's reading interest, and themes as their main criteria in choosing reading books. Meanwhile, book editors are more concerned with the writing abilities of children's book authors and illustrations. Previous study conducted the same research conducted in pre-school or early childhood education (Powell & Diamond, 2012). After conducting in-depth interviews with 26 pre-school teachers and nursery classes in elementary schools integrated with the Kütahya Provincial Directorate of National Education (Turkish Education Directorate), it was found that the criteria used by teachers in selecting books were their easy content. These two previous studies show that the criteria for selecting books used by teachers are different. This research has never been done in Indonesia. Therefore, there is still room for the latest research related to teacher preferences and criteria in choosing children's literature genre reading books in elementary schools. The primary objective of this research is to comprehensively analyze teachers' preferences in selecting literary reading books for children.

2. METHOD

This research is included in the type of qualitative research with the case study method. This case study is a method of qualitative research whose design is comprehensive, intense, detailed, and in-depth, and is more directed to examine contemporary problems or phenomena (Creswell, 2007; Hussain, 2015). Data collection was carried out by observation, interview and documentation techniques. Observations and interviews were conducted in several areas there is SDN 195 Isola, SD Labschool UPI, SDN Perumnas 1, SDN 5 Cibunar, SDN Sindangsuka, and SDN Karayunan. The distribution of places in this study was conducted to see whether there were significant differences between schools in urban and rural locations. The main data source in this study is the result of closed interviews conducted with the resource persons. Meanwhile, secondary data sources were obtained from several supporting documents such as learning plans, or books and journal articles related to this research.

Data processing is done through three stages. The first stage is data reduction. In this first stage, we sort the data used. The second stage is the presentation of data. The data will be presented in the form of descriptive analysis to find out the results of the answers to the research questions. The third stage is drawing conclusions. The validity of the data was tested using the triangulation technique through observation, closed interviews, and documentation for the same data source. The interview instrument grid is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Lattice interview instruments

No	Indicator
1	Availability of children's literature books in schools
2	The use of children's literature books as media in classroom learning
3	Teacher's understanding of children's literature
4	Assessment of children's literature
5	How to choose children's literature books

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

In the research analysis regarding teacher preferences and criteria in choosing children's literature five main findings were found, including the first finding relating to the availability of children's literature books in schools. Figure 1 presents a pie chart related to the percentage of availability of children's literature books in schools.
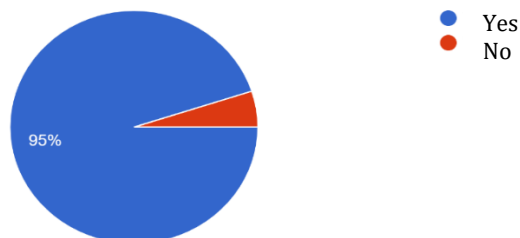

Figure 1. Availability of Children's Literature Books in Schools

Based on Figure 1, the results of interviews and observations in the respective school libraries, it was found that 95% of schools provide children's literature books. Meanwhile, 5% did not provide children's literature books. Schools that provide children's literature books have good and well-maintained libraries. The availability of children's reading books in the library is sufficient and still suitable for children to read. Whereas for schools that fall into the 5% category, children's literature books are lacking and even not worth reading. This is because the school does not have good library facilities. In addition, children's literature books that can be used as media for children to increase reading interest have been damaged and enrichment has not been carried out. The second finding related to the use of children's literature books in the classroom. During the interviews, almost all teachers said that they used children's literature books as learning media in the classroom is show in Figure 2.
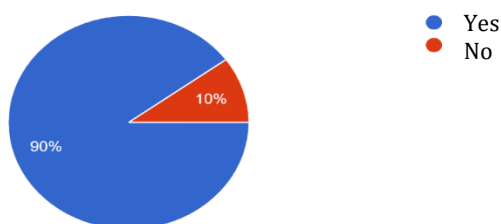

Figure 2. Using Children's Literature Books as Learning Media

Based on Figure 2 the overall results, 90% of the teachers at the school where the interview took place used children's literature as a learning medium, and 10% did not use children's literature as a learning medium. However, when traced back, teachers who used children's literature as a learning medium only relied on the stories available in textbooks. The literary genre used belongs to the genre of oral literature which originates from legends or other fairy tales. The third finding relates to teachers' understanding of children's literature. After conducting the interview. The result is show in Figure 3.
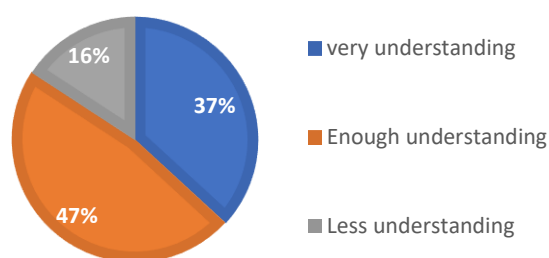

Figure 3. Teacher's understanding of children's literature

Base on Figure 3, almost all teachers understand what children's literature is. It's just that their understanding of children's literature is only limited to a story related to children. In terms *of the grand concept*, at least the teachers already understand what children's literature is like. The fourth finding relates to the assessment made by the teacher of children's literature books used in classroom learning as show in Figure 4.
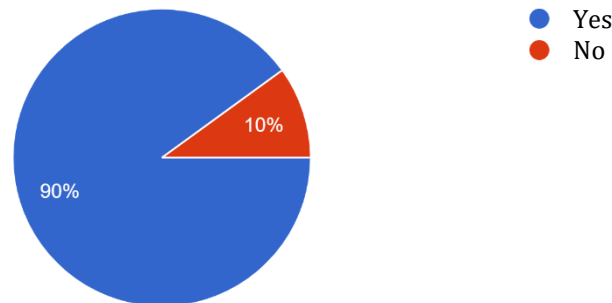
Figure 4. Teacher Doing Assessment of Children's Literature

Base on Figure 4, after conducting interviews, almost all teachers said that they carried out assessments of children's literature. As many as 90% of teachers evaluate children's literature, and another 10% of teachers do not evaluate children's literature. The fifth finding relates to the teacher's criteria for selecting children's literature books. The results of the interviews stated that most of the teachers stated that the main criteria they were looking for were children's stories with content or story content that was appropriate for the age of the children in each class. In addition, the criteria they choose are usually based on attractive illustrations for children.

Discussion

After conducting observations, interviews, and documentation, it was found that 90% of teachers in schools used children's literature genre books as reading material. This high enough number shows that currently Indonesian society, especially teachers in schools, have begun to use literary works as a medium to improve the quality of literacy for the younger generation. After asking more deeply about its use, children's literature is used in two ways. Some are indeed used as text-learning media in Indonesian language subjects (Hasni et al., 2022; Srirahayu et al., 2021). There are also children's literature books that are used in activities outside of learning, such as in the School Literacy Movement (GLS) program which is carried out before the start of learning (Gunansyah et al., 2018; Nurul Fauziah et al., 2020). However, the GLS program was not carried out by all the schools we visited as research objects. We only found the use of children's literature in GSL activities at this school, in a school located in the city of Bandung. The children's literature that is used as a medium in learning Indonesian in class is mostly in traditional literary genres such as fables, folk tales, and legends. While the children's literature used in GLS activities is more varied.

The use of children's literature in this school will certainly be very beneficial because basically, children's literature will make a good contribution to the growth and development of students. Children's literature can develop children's personalities in their process towards maturity as human beings who have a clear identity. This contribution extends from support for the growth of various experiences (taste, emotion, and language), personal (cognitive, social, ethical, and spiritual), exploration and discovery, as well as adventures in enjoyment (Cohen et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2016). Basically, the usefulness of children's literature also depends on the quality of the children's literature itself. Unfortunately, as explained in the research background, currently there are many literature books for children that are not suitable. Therefore, this should be a major concern for teachers in choosing reading books, especially literary genres for children (Kucirkova et al., 2021; Shilfani et al., 2022).

Before assessing children's literature, it would be nice for the teacher to understand the concept of children's literature first. Children's literature is a genre of literature that children can understand emotionally and psychologically. This literary masterpiece is a form of imaginative creation with exposure to a certain language that describes a fictional world, evokes understanding and an experience, and contains certain aesthetic values created by adults or children (Fuad et al., 2020; Lisenbee & Ford, 2018). In another definition, children's literature is good quality books for children from birth to adolescence that cover topics that are relevant and interesting to children of that age, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction. Usually talks about childhood experiences, both good and bad. The content of children's literature also includes very diverse topics that are not part of childhood but are of interest to children (Barone, 2011;

Cohen et al., 2020). Overall, the teachers we interviewed understood the concept of children's literature. They understand and know about the concept of this literary genre. Even though there were some inaccurate understandings, they could easily identify books that belonged to the genre of children's literature and did not belong to the genre of children's literature.

Teachers' knowledge about children's literature holds paramount importance in fostering a holistic educational experience. A robust understanding of various literary genres allows teachers to select age-appropriate books that contribute significantly to students' literacy development, enriching language skills, vocabulary, and comprehension (Golding & Verrier, 2021; Saputro et al., 2018). Beyond the linguistic aspects, teachers well-versed in children's literature can introduce diverse cultural perspectives, promoting awareness and sensitivity among students. The cognitive benefits are substantial, as literature stimulates critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Moreover, teachers who grasp the emotional impact of literature can utilize it as a tool for students to navigate complex emotions and understand societal dynamics (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022; Ramadayanty et al., 2021). A key outcome is the cultivation of a love for reading, with knowledgeable teachers creating engaging environments and recommending books tailored to individual interests. Children's literature becomes a versatile tool, supporting curriculum objectives across subjects and facilitating differentiated instruction. Additionally, teachers equipped with such knowledge can actively engage parents in the reading journey, establishing a collaborative approach to literacy development. Overall, the comprehensive understanding of children's literature empowers teachers to play a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals through the power of storytelling and literary exploration (Lisenbee & Ford, 2018; Masfiah et al., 2021).

However, when we asked about the assessment of children's literature, some things are a little different from what is expected. Even though 90% of teachers evaluate children's literature, when we asked what kind of instrument they have, the average teacher answers that they don't have the instrument. When we asked further, they also did not fully understand how good standards relate to this children's literature (C. C. Chen et al., 2020; Yildirim, 2017). They make judgments based only on book covers, illustrations, and contents. There is no further assessment of how the quality is in terms of readability, the intrinsic elements presented, or even the characteristics of children's literature that are adjusted to the age of children's development. Regarding this matter, there is no definite assessment instrument to assess the quality of children's books. However, Previous study in his book once mentioned six criteria for assessing children's literature, namely in terms of plot, characterization, theme, setting, style, illustration, and format (Nurgiyantoro, 2010).

The absence of a standardized instrument for assessing children's books by teachers in Indonesia may be attributed to several factors. One significant factor is the limited emphasis on children's literature assessment in teacher training programs and professional development initiatives. If the training programs primarily focus on curriculum delivery and subject-specific methodologies, teachers may not receive adequate guidance on evaluating children's books effectively (Mohd Rosmadi & Mohamed Isa, 2019; Sumaryanti, 2020). Moreover, there might be a lack of awareness or resources dedicated to the development of such assessment tools. The education system's priorities and resources may be directed toward addressing immediate concerns, leaving the development of specialized instruments for children's book assessment as a lower priority.

Additionally, the diversity of cultures and languages across Indonesia may contribute to the complexity of creating a universally applicable assessment instrument. Different regions may have unique linguistic nuances, cultural contexts, and preferences, making it challenging to design a one-size-fits-all tool. Another possible factor is the broader assessment culture within the education system, which may predominantly focus on standardized testing and academic achievement in core subjects (Fauzi et al., 2023; Ong, 2022). This emphasis could potentially sideline the importance of assessing children's books as a crucial element in fostering a love for reading, critical thinking, and cultural understanding. Addressing this gap in assessment tools for children's books in Indonesia would require a concerted effort from educational policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher training programs. This effort could involve integrating training on children's literature assessment into teacher education programs, allocating resources for the development of culturally responsive assessment tools, and promoting the significance of assessing children's books as part of a holistic education (H. Chen & Chuang, 2021; Uhl et al., 2021). In this regard, it is necessary to have the latest research on children's literature assessment instruments so that teachers or parents can assess children's literature books that are good to read.

Although teachers do not have children's literature assessment instruments, they have their own way of selecting children's literature books. Teachers said they focused on the content. Before children's literature is used as reading material in Indonesian language lessons in class, the teachers make sure that there is no violence in reading. In addition, the selection is also made based on the teaching materials or themes being discussed. The teacher with the initials "Ii" who served as one of the homeroom teachers at SD Labschool UPI stated that usually she would look for content that fits the needs of the class. Adjusted to the theme being discussed besides that it is also adjusted to the age of the students. If children's literature

will be used in upper-level classes the stories used will be slightly more complex than the stories given to students in lower-level classes. The criteria used by the teacher in choosing are the theme which must be in accordance with the lives of children, the content of the story that conveys good learning messages for children, illustrations that are colorful and do not have double or ambiguous meanings, and the use of simple language and easy to understand.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, the research indicates a positive shift with 90% of teachers incorporating children's literature into their reading materials, showcasing a growing recognition of its potential for enhancing literacy. The dual usage in formal learning and extracurricular activities reflects the versatility of children's literature. However, a significant gap exists in assessment practices, as teachers lack a standardized instrument, relying on superficial criteria. This gap stems from limited emphasis in teacher training, cultural diversity, and a predominant focus on standardized testing. Addressing this requires collaborative efforts for comprehensive training and culturally responsive assessment tools. Despite the absence of a formal instrument, teachers prioritize thematic relevance, positive messages, engaging illustrations, and age appropriateness in book selection. Moving forward, the development of standardized assessment tools is crucial for a more systematic and effective evaluation of the educational impact of children's literature in Indonesia.

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