

Reading Difficulties of Third Grade Students: A Case Study at Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah Pejagatan

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore the reading difficulties of third-grade students at the Islamic elementary school (madrasah ibtidaiyyah) level. A qualitative approach with a case study method was used in the study located at MI Pejagatan Kutowinangun, Kebumen. A purposive sampling technique was used with the results of the research subjects being a teacher and three third-grade students. Data were collected through observation and interview techniques. Data were analyzed interactively with the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research findings indicate that the reading difficulties experienced by third-grade students include lack of memory of the material that has been taught, difficulty spelling especially when spelling long words, letter substitution errors due to lack of attention to letters in the reading, and difficulty distinguishing letters that cause students to make mistakes in reading and writing. These findings can practically be used as a basis for determining for teachers to overcome students' reading difficulties through the use of effective learning models/approaches.*

Keywords: *Reading difficulties, Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah, Students*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bermaksud untuk mengeksplorasi kesulitan membaca siswa kelas III di tingkat madrasah ibtidaiyyah. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus digunakan dalam penelitian yang berlokasi di MI Pejagatan Kutowinangun, Kebumen. Teknik purposive sampling digunakan dengan hasil subjek penelitian berupa guru dan tiga siswa kelas III. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik observasi dan wawancara. Data dianalisis secara analisis interaktif dengan tahapan kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesulitan membaca yang dialami oleh siswa kelas III diantaranya kurangnya daya ingat terhadap materi yang telah diajarkan, kesulitan mengeja terutama saat mengeja kata yang panjang, kesalahan penggantian huruf karena kurang memperhatikan huruf pada bacaan, dan kesulitan membedakan huruf sehingga membuat siswa salah dalam membaca dan menulis. Temuan ini secara praktis dapat dijadikan dasar penentuan bagi guru untuk mengatasi kesulitan membaca siswa melalui penggunaan model/pendekatan pembelajaran yang efektif.

Kata Kunci: Kesulitan membaca, Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah, Siswa

Introduction

Reading is an essential part of everyday life because humans cannot be separated from the activity of reading, whether in physical or digital form. Reading ability is also a basic skill that should be possessed by every individual. Reading ability not only functions as a means of obtaining information, but also as an absolute prerequisite for the development of thinking skills, conceptual understanding, and students' overall academic success.¹

The importance of reading is also supported by Burn, who stated the definition of reading ability as an absolute ability that must be mastered by every individual to progress.² In line with this, a number of international studies have emphasized that reading skills at the elementary school or Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah level are crucial for determining long-term learning outcomes and students' active participation in studying across discipline.³ Along with this support, Law No. 2 of 1989 states that reading is a basic skill activity that needs to be fostered and developed in language education. This ability needs to be instilled from an elementary age.⁴

In terms of development, reading skills in elementary school students progress through two main stages: beginning reading (learning to read) and reading to learn.⁵ In the beginning reading stage, students are required to master letter recognition, phoneme-grapheme relationships, and accurate spelling skills, while in the advanced reading stage, students are expected to have achieved reading fluency that allows for optimal comprehension of the

¹ Xinke Song et al., "Effectiveness of Online Project-Based Learning on Chinese EFL Learners' Critical Thinking Skills and Reading Comprehension Ability," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 56 (June 2025): 101778, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101778>.

² I. N. Anisah et al., "Penggunaan Strategi Group Mapping Activities (GMA) Dalam Meningkatkan Kemampuan Membaca Siswa," *Indonesian Gender and Society Journal* 1, no. 2 (2021): 69-78, <https://doi.org/10.23887/igsj.v1i2.39085>.

³ OECD, *PISA 2018 Results: What Students Know and Can Do?* (OECD Publishing, 2019).

⁴ Riga Zahara Nurani et al., "Analisis Kesulitan Membaca Permulaan Pada Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Basicedu* 5, no. 3 (2021): 1462-70, <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v5i3.907>.

⁵ Yahia Alramamneh et al., "Investigating the Relationship between Parental Attitudes toward Reading, Early Literacy Activities, and Reading Literacy in Arabic among Emirati Children," *Large-Scale Assessments in Education* 11, no. 1 (2023): 36, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40536-023-00187-3>.

reading content.⁶ Grade III of elementary school or madrasah ibtida'iyyah is seen as a critical transition phase between the two stages.⁷ If students still experience difficulties in basic reading at this stage, then learning in other subjects has the potential to be hampered.

Unfortunately, reading ability is not evenly distributed across all students. This is particularly true in a third-grade madrasah in Kebumen. Observations revealed that some students still lacked the basic reading skills. They struggled with spelling, distinguishing between similar letters, and reading difficulties. This low reading ability stems from a lack of enthusiasm for reading and a lack of teacher effort. This finding indicates that reading skills, which should have been established in grade III, have not yet developed optimally.

In addition to field observations, several international research reports reveal that some students experience difficulties in early reading, such as letter recognition, phoneme and grapheme association, and reading fluency, which impacts their low reading comprehension.⁸ This problematic situation is also often found in developing countries such as Indonesia, as reflected in the PISA results, which show low reading literacy among primary and secondary school-aged students.⁹ These difficulties not only affect reading accuracy, but also impact students' reading comprehension and learning motivation.¹⁰

⁶ Saif Alneyadi et al., "The Impact of Digital Environment vs. Traditional Method on Literacy Skills; Reading and Writing of Emirati Fourth Graders," *Sustainability* 15, no. 4 (2023): 3418, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043418>.

⁷ Timothy Rasinski et al., "Reading Fluency: More Than Automaticity? More Than a Concern for the Primary Grades?," *Literacy Research and Instruction* 48, no. 4 (2009): 350–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388070802468715>; J. S. Chall, *Stages of Reading Development* (McGraw-Hill, 1983).

⁸ Christopher J. Lonigan et al., "Examining the Simple View of Reading with Elementary School Children: Still Simple After All These Years," *Remedial and Special Education* 39, no. 5 (2018): 260–73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932518764833>; Linnea C. Ehri et al., "Systematic Phonics Instruction Helps Students Learn to Read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 71, no. 3 (2001): 393–447, <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543071003393>.

⁹ OECD, *PISA 2018 Results: What Students Know and Can Do?*

¹⁰ K. Cain and J. Oakhill, *Reading Comprehension Development from Childhood to Adolescence* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Charles Perfetti and Joseph Stafura, "Word Knowledge in a Theory of Reading Comprehension,"

In the context of basic education in Indonesia, particularly in Islamic elementary schools (madrasah ibtdaiyyah), reading difficulties remain a significant challenge. Several national studies have shown that some students have not yet achieved the expected reading competencies, particularly in fluency and accuracy. According to experts, reading difficulties begin with a suboptimal arrangement of central requirements for implementing minimum dysfunction.¹¹ Many factors influence reading ability, such as physical, psychological, fatigue, family, school, and social factors. Previous research also confirmed that reading difficulties are caused by various factors, such as neurological and cognitive factors, learning motivation, psychological readiness, family environment, and school environment.¹² The existence of reading difficulties requires in-depth information about the reading difficulties of third-grade students at MI Pejagatan Kebumen.

Similar studies have been conducted previously, such as those by Putri and Ratri, who investigated the reading difficulties of elementary school students.¹³ Furthermore, Pramesti also discussed the factors inhibiting reading learning in elementary schools.¹⁴ Furthermore, Rohimah highlighted the reading difficulties of first-grade students at the madrasah level.¹⁵ Internationally, research has also focused heavily on early detection and intervention of reading difficulties in the early stages of literacy learning.¹⁶

Scientific Studies of Reading 18, no. 1 (2014): 22–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2013.827687>.

¹¹ A Siregar et al., “Studi Kasus Siswa Yg Mengalami Keterlambatan Membaca Di Desa Karya Jadi Kecamatan Batang Serangan,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 9, no. 2 (2023): 52–59.

¹² J. M Fletcher et al., *Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention* (Guilford Press, 2019); Margaret J. Snowling and Charles Hulme, “Interventions for Children’s Language and Literacy Difficulties,” *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders* 47, no. 1 (2012): 27–34, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-6984.2011.00081.x>.

¹³ Gusti Ayu Teristalya Merata Putri and Ni Wayan Rati, “Reading Problems in Grade II Elementary School Students,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dasar* 6, no. 2 (2022): 244–52, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jisd.v6i2.42584>.

¹⁴ Fitria Pramesti, “Analisis Faktor-Faktor Penghambat Membaca Permulaan pada Siswa Kelas 1 SD,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dasar* 2, no. 3 (2018): 283, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jisd.v2i3.16144>.

¹⁵ Siti Rohimah, “Reading Difficulties and Factors Affecting Reading Difficulties of Students of Grade 1 Elementary School,” *LADU: Journal of Languages and Education* 1, no. 5 (2021): 189–95, <https://doi.org/10.56724/ladu.v1i5.85>.

¹⁶ Lonigan et al., “Examining the Simple View of Reading With Elementary School Children”; Fletcher et al., *Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention*.

Furthermore, research that reveals the pattern of reading difficulties of third-grade students of Islamic elementary schools based on empirical data from observations and in-depth interviews is also still rare.

However, there is a clear research gap: the limited number of studies specifically analyzing reading difficulties among third-grade students in Islamic elementary schools, particularly community-based schools like Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah Pejagatan, Kebumen. Third grade is a crucial transition phase from beginning reading to reading comprehension. This lack of research has the potential to lead to inaccurate learning strategies and interventions implemented by teachers at this level.

Building on this gap, this study aims to analyze the reading difficulties of third-grade students in Indonesian language at MI Pejagatan Kutowinangun, Kebumen. The results are expected to contribute empirically to the development of more contextual and targeted reading learning strategies at the elementary school level.

Method

This research is a qualitative study using a case study method. A case study is defined as an in-depth study of a phenomenon in its entirety and comprehensively by utilizing various data sources.¹⁷ The research was conducted at MI Pejagatan Kutowinangun, Kebumen Regency. This madrasah was chosen because some students still experience reading difficulties. The research was conducted over three months, from May to July.

The subjects of this study were a third-grade teacher and three third-grade students who were not yet fluent in reading. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling techniques, or sampling based on established criteria. According to Martha, purposive sampling is the determination of samples based on certain criteria.¹⁸ MI Pejagatan Kutowinangun was chosen as the research subject because the madrasah is a reference in Kebumen Regency as an implementer of the school literacy movement, has A accreditation, and provides complete library services.

Data were collected through observation and interviews. Observation was used to collect data through direct observation of students' reading difficulties in three struggling students. Interviews were used to collect data to complement the observation data directed at teachers and students.

¹⁷ J. U Muliawan, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Dengan Studi Kasus* (Penerbit Gava Media, 2014).

¹⁸ Evi Martha and Sudarti Kresno, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (PT Rajagrafindo Persada, 2016).

Data validity was tested using source and method triangulation.¹⁹ Source triangulation was conducted by checking data obtained from two different sources. Information from both sources was used as the basis for the findings and analyzed for consistency in the answers. Method triangulation was conducted by checking data obtained from observation and interviews. Data from both methods were analyzed for relevance to draw further conclusions.

The data was analyzed using interactive analysis, adapted from Miles and Huberman's theory. There were three important stages: data condensation, which involved sorting out important information related to the focus of students' reading difficulties, presenting the data in descriptive form, and concluding the research findings.²⁰

Result and Discussion

Based on the researcher's observations, 3 students were found to have difficulty reading. One student did not fully understand the letter forms from A to Z, namely RS, so he had difficulty spelling correctly. While the other two students already knew, but had difficulty combining words and syllables. To ensure this, the researcher conducted an interview with the third-grade teacher regarding the students' fluency in reading skills. The result: "There are 21 third grade students, there are 3 students who cannot read yet. Of these 3 students, one only knows a few letters, the others, thank God, are doing well."

The first student was RS. Observations showed that RS's poor memory was due to the unfavourable classroom environment. As a result, RS couldn't focus on learning and easily forgot the teacher's explanations. The teacher agreed with these findings, explaining that he often forgot material previously explained.

RS also has difficulty spelling. He still stutters when spelling, especially long words. For example, when reading "library" which RS reads "pe rp us ta ka an" another word, "pernyataan" which RS reads "pe r nyat an". From the interview results, RS stated that he rarely practices his reading skills at home. To confirm this, the researcher conducted an interview with his third-grade teacher. The teacher stated, "RS is quite difficult when asked to study."

¹⁹ M Husnullail and M Syahran Jailani, "Teknik pemeriksaan keabsahan data dalam riset ilmiah," *Journal Genta Mulia* 15, no. 2 (2024): 70-78.

²⁰ M. B Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd Ed.) (Sage, 2014).

Another difficulty was evident in RS's attention to reading activities. RS tended to be less focused on learning. For example, the word "sepeda" was read as "sedepa" and "buku" was read as "duku." These observations were supported by interviews where RS responded that he was indeed less interested in learning to read. Furthermore, RS had not yet fully recognized letters. Observations of RS revealed that RS was still confused about differentiating letters that looked similar, such as "b" and "d" or "m" and "n." Furthermore, the third-grade teacher also stated that RS was disobedient to the teacher when asked to study. He preferred playing during class.

The second student is AK. Similar to RS, AK also experienced almost similar difficulties. The results of observations showed that AK experienced low memory in recognizing letters A-Z. AK still had some letters that he did not remember the shape and pronunciation. This is what caused AK not to be able to read. The researcher also conducted an interview with AK and obtained the results that AK was indeed not able to remember the letters from A-Z completely. AK also experienced errors in writing the shape of the letters AK. This was also clarified by what was stated by the third-grade teacher who said, "When AK was asked to read words, there were still letters that were pronounced incorrectly and written incorrectly when asked to write a word."

Another difficulty experienced by AK is his lack of letter recognition. From the results of the researcher's observations of AK, AK has difficulty distinguishing letters that look similar, such as "b" and "d". Another example is the word "bike" which is pronounced "sebeda". This problem arises because he cannot focus and is lazy to learn to read at school. In addition, AK also rarely studies at home. Worse, AK has not been able to memorize vowels completely. As a result of his lack of letter recognition, AK also has difficulty spelling. From the results of observations, AK also has difficulty reading letters that have double consonants, such as the word "bermain" which is read as "ber-ma-in". In line with that, the results of interviews with teachers stated, "AK is very enthusiastic and enthusiastic. However, he still stutters in spelling words because AK has not fully memorized the letters A-Z."

The third student is RFF. He also experiences the same problem. Poor memory and concentration are broken when there is external intervention. Like RS, RFF also has difficulty spelling. For example, the word "library" is pronounced "per-pu-st-ak-aan", the word "question" is pronounced "per-ta-ny-a-an". RFF also has difficulty distinguishing letters that have similar shapes. Letters that are often forgotten include "r, q, b, d, and p." RFF often mixes them up when writing or reading. To confirm this, the researcher interviewed the third-grade teacher who said, "RFF still needs to learn more about recognizing letters from A to Z. RFF also still stutters when reading and spelling long words."

Based on this research, several main patterns of reading difficulties were identified. First, students experienced a lack of memory. Three students demonstrated difficulty remembering letters, syllables, and words they had previously learned. This was evident when students frequently forgot letters or words they had just spelled, requiring them to repeat the reading process. This finding was reinforced by interviews with class teachers, who stated that students frequently forgot previously explained material. Aprilia and Aminatun found something similar that students who have poor memory is caused by each student having different memory abilities, depending on how they respond to the information given.²¹

In line with these findings, other studies also report that students' weak comprehension and memory are among the factors that hinder their learning to read.²² Furthermore, similar studies report similar findings that elementary school children still experience difficulties recognizing letters, and difficulty concentrating.²³ Memory ability indicates a person's ability to store and recall information they have previously learned. In the learning process, this ability is very important because memory is directly related to the material taught by the teacher and the use of the brain as the main tool in learning.

The second difficulty is difficulty distinguishing letters that have similar shapes, such as the letters b and d, p and q, and m and n. This difficulty causes students to often make mistakes in reading and writing words. The results of the observations showed that there were pronunciation errors due to the exchange of letters, for example the word bicycle was pronounced "sebeda" or "sedepa". Sargiani et al. found a similar thing.²⁴ Students who had difficulty reading were reflected in the students' spelling consonants in a word, whether the letters were in the middle or at the end of the word. This

²¹ Ayu Aprilia and Dyah Aminatun, "Investigating Memory Loss: How Depression Affects Students' Memory Endurance," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning* 3, no. 1 (2022): 1-11, <https://doi.org/10.33365/jeltl.v3i1.1719>.

²² Sri Nuraini et al., "Faktor-Faktor Penghambat Belajar Membaca Permulaan Pada Siswa Kelas II Di SD Negeri 91 Palembang," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling* 4, no. 3 (2022): 1540-45.

²³ Dwi Tirta Laksmi et al., "Strategi Guru Dalam Mengatasi Kesulitan Membaca Siswa Kelas 2 di SDN 1 Selebung," *Renjana Pendidikan Dasar* 2, no. 4 (2022): 266-72.

²⁴ Renan De Almeida Sargiani et al., "Teaching Beginners to Decode Consonant-Vowel Syllables Using Grapheme-Phoneme Subunits Facilitates Reading and Spelling as Compared with Teaching Whole-Syllable Decoding," *Reading Research Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2022): 629-48, <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.432>.

was because students were used to spelling by saying syllables when reading. If there are consonants in the middle of a word, students will have difficulty reading and understanding the contents of the reading text.

In addition, there are other similar findings where the reading difficulties experienced by students include problems in spelling words, stuttering in reading, mistakes in hyphenating words, omitting letters, mispronouncing letters, and not yet recognizing letters.²⁵ The same thing was found by other researchers who concluded that the reading difficulties of elementary school students in grade three were none other than letter recognition (vowels and consonants), diphthong recognition, and difficulty reading syllables.²⁶ Similar findings were explained by previous researchers who concluded that students' reading difficulties included difficulty recognizing letters of the alphabet, distinguishing similar letters, difficulty spelling letters, difficulty pronouncing consonant combinations, and difficulty pronouncing the letter "r".²⁷

The third difficulty is spelling long words. Students read long words in a disjointed and halting manner, sometimes having to repeat the spelling process several times. This error is found when students read words such as "library," "question," and "statement." Letter substitution errors occur because students pay insufficient attention to letters and sometimes mispronounce letters when reading. Nushafnita and Zainuddin's research reported that letter substitution errors are some of the errors that can occur for elementary school students.²⁸ Subsequent research also concluded similar findings where students' errors in reading are more often pronunciation errors in letter substitutions (consonants) so that their reading becomes incorrect.²⁹ In fact,

²⁵ Nurul Azkiya and Syamsu Ridhuan, "Strategi Guru Dalam Mengatasi Kesulitan Membaca Permulaan Siswa Kelas III SDN Duri Kepa 03 Jakarta Barat," *Lingua Rima: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* 12, no. 1 (2023): 125, <https://doi.org/10.31000/lgrm.v12i1.8266>.

²⁶ Putri Nirwana Torau et al., "Analisis Kesulitan Membaca pada Siswa Kelas III SD," *DEIKTIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra* 2, no. 3 (2022): 380-99, <https://doi.org/10.53769/deiktis.v2i3.307>.

²⁷ Dina Putri Ariyani et al., "Analisis Kesulitan Membaca pada Siswa Kelas 1 SD 2 Kaliwungu," *Jurnal Muara Pendidikan* 8, no. 2 (2023): 363-70, <https://doi.org/10.52060/mp.v8i2.1337>.

²⁸ Puput Nurshafnita and Darwin Zainuddin, "Analisis Kesalahan Pelafalan Huruf Hijaiyyah Siswa Kelas VII Mts Al-Wasliyah Sigambal," *Tsaqofiya: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab* 5, no. 2 (2023): 196-213, <https://doi.org/10.21154/tsaqofiya.v5i2.198>.

²⁹ Syifa Salsabila Fitrianingrum and Elfiana Fitri Aminingsih, "Analisis Kesalahan Pengucapan dalam Membaca Huruf Hijaiyyah: Kajian

difficulties in letter substitution were made as many as 28 times as found by previous researchers.³⁰

The fourth difficulty is errors in reading words, in the form of adding or replacing letters and words when reading. This error occurs when students pay less attention to the text they are reading, resulting in pronunciation that does not match the written text. This affects his ability to read words correctly and fluently. All three require a special approach to learning to help them overcome difficulties in distinguishing letters, such as the use of multisensory methods or visual aids.

According to another research, students who have not memorized the letters A-Z sometimes have difficulty distinguishing letters that have similar shapes, such as "b" and "d," which causes doubts when reading.³¹ Ehri discovered that some students still didn't recognize letters. They needed to be introduced to letters in their entirety to avoid confusion when distinguishing letters that looked similar.³² During the reading stage, students need guidance to understand each letter and progress to word by word. Similar studies report that students have difficulty continuing a word due to an inability to decode, understand word meaning, and lack of reading fluency.³³

Previous findings also reported about the difficulties of elementary school students in Tasikmalaya in distinguishing letters, especially letters that have similarities, such as the letters M and N, F and V, D and B, J and Z, Q and O, and M and W. This difficulty causes students to read haltingly.³⁴ Most students forget one of the letters they read so they have to remember longer to read the available reading.

Fonologi," *DIAJAR: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1-7, <https://doi.org/10.54259/diajar.v3i1.2224>.

³⁰ Naufal Syahrizal Akbar and Bambang Yulianto, "Kesalahan Berbahasa Tulis Anak Disleksia Studi Kasus Pada R," *BAPALA* 11, no. 3 (2024): 478-86.

³¹ Indina Tarjiah et al., "Increasing The Reading Ability of a Student with Dyslexia in Elementary School: An Explanatory Case Study by Using Family Support, Remedial Teaching, and Multisensory Method," *Frontiers in Education* 8 (July 2023): 1022580, <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1022580>.

³² Linnea C. Ehri, "What Teachers Need to Know and Do to Teach Letter-Sounds, Phonemic Awareness, Word Reading, and Phonics," *The Reading Teacher* 76, no. 1 (2022): 53-61, <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2095>.

³³ Herri Susanto, "A Study On Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary," *Journey: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy* 4, no. 2 (2021): 46-50, <https://doi.org/10.33503/journey.v4i2.1413>.

³⁴ Nurani et al., "Analisis Kesulitan Membaca Permulaan Pada Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar."

The findings of this study indicate that third-grade students' reading difficulties are not only related to letter mastery but also to limitations in memory and the cognitive processes that support reading activities. Difficulty remembering previously learned letters and words indicates limitations in working memory. Working memory plays a crucial role in combining letters into syllables and meaningful words. This aligns with Snowling and Hulme's findings, which state that weaknesses in phonological memory can hinder reading fluency in elementary school-aged children.³⁵

Difficulty distinguishing letters with similar shapes, such as b and d, indicates that students' visual discrimination abilities have not yet developed optimally. According to Ehri, failure to visually distinguish letters can lead to mispronunciations and letter substitutions when reading.³⁶ These findings corroborate previous research suggesting that reading difficulties in the transitional phase of middle-grade elementary school are often related to mastery of basic symbols.

Furthermore, difficulty spelling long words and a tendency to stutter indicate that students have not yet reached fluent reading. This condition has the potential to hinder reading comprehension because students' attention is more focused on the spelling process than on understanding the meaning of the text. These findings align with the view that reading fluency is an important prerequisite for the development of advanced reading skills. Mistakes in adding and substituting words while reading also indicate low student attention and concentration during the reading process. Poor reading habits at home and a lack of focus during classroom learning also reinforce these findings. Therefore, the results of this study confirm that third-grade students' reading difficulties need to be addressed through more systematic, repetitive reading instruction tailored to the characteristics of the students' difficulties.

The implications of this research for reading instruction are that third-grade teachers at Islamic elementary schools cannot assume that students' reading skills have developed optimally. Teachers need to conduct ongoing diagnostic reading assessments to identify specific difficulties experienced by students. These findings also highlight the urgency of implementing systematic reading instruction that aligns with the transition phase from beginning reading to reading comprehension.

³⁵ Snowling and Hulme, "Interventions for Children's Language and Literacy Difficulties."

³⁶ Ehri, "What Teachers Need to Know and Do to Teach Letter-Sounds, Phonemic Awareness, Word Reading, and Phonics."

Conclusion

This study concluded that the reading difficulties experienced by third-grade students were a lack of memory of the material that had been taught; difficulty distinguishing letter shapes such as b and d so that they had difficulty spelling or even reading correctly; difficulty spelling long words so that they often repeated when spelling; and often adding and replacing words when reading. This study can be used as evaluation material in overcoming students' reading difficulties in the learning process in the classroom so that students can read fluently through the use of appropriate Indonesian language learning models or approaches. From these findings, the researcher suggests that teachers provide appropriate treatment after identifying the location of each student's reading difficulties.

This research contributes to educational practice by specifically explaining the form of reading difficulties among lower-grade students and emphasizing gradual and iterative reinforcement of learning according to students' abilities. For future researchers, these findings add to the empirical evidence on reading difficulties and open up opportunities for them to develop or test specific reading instructional interventions for third-grade students at Islamic elementary schools.

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