



## Analysis of Beginning Reading Learning Problems Among Grade III Students at Elementary School

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the factors that cause reading difficulties among upper-grade students and to examine strategies for overcoming these challenges. A qualitative research design with a descriptive approach was employed. The research subjects comprised 12 Grade VI students and one Grade VI homeroom teacher at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and tests and validated using triangulation techniques encompassing source triangulation, technical triangulation, and temporal triangulation. The findings indicate that a considerable proportion of upper-grade students continue to experience reading difficulties. Specifically, 14 out of 28 total upper-grade students (Grades 4, 5, and 6) exhibited reading difficulties, including difficulty spelling letters, difficulty pronouncing letters, letter substitution errors, inattention to punctuation marks, and insufficient letter recognition. These difficulties are attributable to both internal factors, such as low learning motivation and poor memory retention, and external factors, including the influence of the surrounding social environment, limited school guidance and support services, and restricted instructional time. These findings highlight the urgent need for

targeted early intervention and differentiated instructional strategies to address reading difficulties in elementary school settings.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes a deliberate and systematic process of transforming individuals' behaviors and attitudes in order to facilitate personal maturation and development. According to Sulistiono (2021), education represents a primary key to national development, through which every individual can acquire knowledge and skills to enhance their personal quality. The implementation of education in schools, particularly at the elementary level, must carefully consider the diversity of students' cognitive and skill-based competencies. Reading, as one of the most fundamental skills in the educational process, plays a decisive role in students' ability to access and comprehend knowledge across all subject areas.

Reading is not merely the act of vocalizing written language or phonetic symbols; it is an active cognitive process involving the comprehension and interpretation of written content (Broto, as cited in Abdurrahman, 2012). The ability to read is therefore an indispensable competency that every student must develop in order to engage meaningfully with academic content. Students who lack adequate reading skills are likely to encounter compounding difficulties across multiple subject areas, as comprehension of written text underpins academic learning at every level (Perfetti & Stafura, 2018).

In Indonesia's current educational system, students are expected to master a broad range of subjects. This expectation can generate academic anxiety, which may adversely affect students' potential and overall learning capacity. Students with reading difficulties often struggle to differentiate letter shapes and sizes, resulting in mispronunciations of words. They frequently

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omit or add words during reading, or attempt to read from the middle or end of sentences. Students with reading difficulties generally demonstrate a reluctance toward reading activities, and their anxiety intensifies when confronted with tasks that demand reading proficiency (Vellutino et al., 2018).

Reading difficulties at the elementary level are closely associated with poor spelling, halting oral reading, difficulty with letter recognition, and errors in letter substitution. These difficulties represent foundational obstacles to academic achievement and must receive serious attention to ensure that all students can participate fully and successfully in classroom learning (Lyon et al., 2018; Snowling, 2020). According to Iskandarwassid and Sunandar (as cited in Susanti, 2018), classroom teachers must have a thorough understanding of the developmental characteristics of elementary-aged students, a stage often referred to as the intellectual development period, in order to effectively address reading difficulties. Students at this stage are typically receptive and eager to acquire new knowledge and experiences, making early and targeted intervention particularly impactful.

Low reading ability can have far-reaching negative consequences for students' academic achievement and moral development. Students who struggle with reading tend to experience diminished self-confidence and reduced learning motivation (Ariyati, as cited in Rafika, 2020; Morgan & Fuchs, 2016). Rahman (2021) emphasized that teachers must be capable of accurately identifying the specific reading difficulties faced by students, as this assessment provides the informational foundation necessary to design and implement effective, individualized learning support.

Preliminary observations and interviews conducted with Grade 4, 5, and 6 students and one Grade VI homeroom teacher at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency, confirmed the presence of reading difficulties among a notable proportion of students. The observed difficulties included challenges with spelling, insufficient letter recognition, and letter substitution errors. These findings are consistent with Wulandari (as cited in Snowling, 2020), who noted

that students experiencing beginning reading difficulties are unable to identify words accurately, resulting in low reading comprehension. If such difficulties are not promptly addressed, they are likely to have enduring adverse effects on students' reading development and overall academic performance.

Based on the foregoing background, this study was conducted to: (1) identify the factors that cause reading difficulties among upper-grade students at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency; and (2) examine strategies and approaches for addressing these difficulties.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research, as defined by Moleong (2019), is a research approach that seeks to understand phenomena as experienced by research subjects in depth and in their natural context. The descriptive approach enables the researcher to describe cases or problems as encountered in the field through detailed verbal narration (Sukmadinata, as cited in Akda & Dafit, 2021).

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency, located at Jalan Klamono KM 26, Sorong Regency. The research subjects comprised 12 Grade VI students and one Grade VI homeroom teacher. Data collection was conducted through three primary methods: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis. The observational component focused on identifying reading difficulties manifested during classroom activities, while interviews were conducted with both students and the homeroom teacher to obtain contextual information regarding the nature and causes of the difficulties observed.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation, which is defined as a combination of various data collection techniques and multiple data sources (Moleong, 2019). Three forms of triangulation were applied: (1) source triangulation, wherein data were gathered from a single primary informant (the Grade VI homeroom teacher) to corroborate and cross-check findings from

student observations; (2) technical triangulation, in which multiple data collection methods, namely observation, interview, and documentation, were used to verify consistency of findings; and (3) temporal triangulation, whereby observations and interviews were conducted at carefully selected times (morning sessions, when teachers and students were not preoccupied with other activities) to minimize reactivity and ensure data naturalness.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Research Setting*

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency, located at Jalan Klamono KM. 26, Sorong Regency. This school has been accredited at the B level. The school is led by Principal Ibu Megdalena Subay, S.Pd., and has a total teaching staff of 9 educators (6 female teachers and 3 male teachers), 1 administrative staff member, and 1 school security officer. The total student enrollment is 63 students.

The research timeline proceeded as follows: on Wednesday, July 24, 2024, the researcher conducted an initial environmental observation of the school and observed students engaged in learning activities. On Thursday-Friday, July 25-26, 2024, the first formal observation session was conducted with Grade VI students as primary data sources. On Saturday, August 3, 2024, final documentation of all research activities – from inception to completion – was recorded.

The vision of SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency, is to shape students who are faithful, intelligent, skilled, and morally upright within a safe and pleasant environment. The school's mission statements are as follows:

1. To cultivate students' consistent practice of religious worship.
2. To habituate students to pray before and after engaging in activities.
3. To implement active, creative, effective, and enjoyable (PAKEM) teaching and learning activities.
4. To develop students' potential through extracurricular activities.

5. To cultivate honesty and compliance with school regulations.
6. To create a school environment that is safe, comfortable, clean, orderly, and aesthetically pleasant.

**Research Participants**

**Table 1.** Profile of Teachers, Students, and Administrative Staff at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency

Teachers	Total Students	Students Observed	Administrative Staff
9 teachers	63 students	12 students	1 person

Source: School administration records, SD Negeri 4 Sorong Regency, 2024

**Data Validity: Triangulation**

Data validity in this study was established through triangulation. As affirmed by Moleong (2019), triangulation represents an integration of various data collection techniques and available data sources. Three triangulation strategies were employed:

Source triangulation was applied by cross-checking data from the Grade VI homeroom teacher's interview responses against the observational data gathered from student activities, thereby verifying the consistency of information regarding reading difficulties. Technical triangulation was achieved by utilizing three distinct data collection methods, observation, interview, and documentation, and comparing the findings across these methods to ensure convergence of evidence. Temporal triangulation involved conducting observations and interviews during morning sessions when neither teachers nor students were occupied with other responsibilities, thereby minimizing potential disruption to data quality.

**Observation Guidelines and Findings**

**Table 2.** Observation Guidelines and Findings: Factors Causing Reading Difficulties at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency

Aspect	Indicators	Observation Findings
Factors causing reading	1. Difficulty spelling	14 out of 28 total

Aspect	Indicators	Observation Findings
difficulties among upper-grade students at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency	letters 2. Difficulty pronouncing letters 3. Letter substitution errors 4. Inattention to punctuation 5. Insufficient letter recognition	upper-grade students (Grades 4, 5, and 6) still experienced difficulty spelling letters, were unable to recognize all letters, and could not Combine words into complete sentences. Contributing factors include internal factors (low motivation and poor memory) and external factors (social environment influence and limited school support services).

Source: Observation data, July–August 2024

## Discussion

### *Factors Causing Reading Difficulties: Internal and External Dimensions*

The findings of this study reveal that reading difficulties among upper-grade students at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency, are multifactorial in nature, encompassing both internal (student-level) and external (environmental) determinants. Fourteen out of 28 total upper-grade students across Grades 4, 5, and 6 demonstrated identifiable reading difficulties, a proportion that underscores the urgency of targeted intervention.

The internal factors identified in this study include the following: (1) difficulty seeing at distance, which may indicate undiagnosed visual impairment requiring medical referral; (2) poor memory retention, which affects students' ability to retain and retrieve letter–sound correspondences and word forms; (3) difficulty spelling letters; (4) difficulty pronouncing letters and words; (5) letter substitution errors, wherein students replace one letter or sound with another; (6) inattention to punctuation marks; and (7) insufficient letter recognition. These internal factors are consistent with the clinical and educational literature on reading difficulties and dyslexia (Lyon et al., 2018;

Vellutino et al., 2018; Padeliadu & Antoniou, 2021), which identifies phonological processing deficits, rapid automatized naming difficulties, and working memory limitations as the primary cognitive underpinnings of reading disorders.

From a motivational standpoint, internal reading difficulties are exacerbated by the absence of self-directed learning motivation. Students who struggle with reading tend to develop avoidance behaviors and low academic self-efficacy, as documented by Morgan and Fuchs (2016), who demonstrated a bidirectional relationship between reading skill deficits and declining reading motivation. Hamonangan (2020) further highlighted that poor memory retention, one of the key internal factors identified in this study, can be addressed through brain-based learning models that leverage cognitive engagement and contextual meaning-making.

The external factors identified include the influence of the surrounding social environment, particularly peer dynamics and residential conditions that may distract students from sustained academic engagement, as well as institutional limitations at the school level. SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency, currently lacks a dedicated remedial learning room or structured tutoring program specifically designed for students with reading difficulties. The restricted school schedule further limits opportunities for individualized remedial instruction. These structural deficiencies compound the existing reading difficulties and reduce the probability of timely intervention.

These findings align with Setiawan and Wahyudin (2022), who identified limited school support infrastructure and insufficient specialized instruction as major contributors to reading difficulties in upper-grade elementary students in Indonesia. Similarly, Latifatu et al. (2021) and Akda and Dafit (2021) confirmed that both internal cognitive factors and external environmental conditions contribute to reading difficulties and that early identification followed by differentiated instructional support is essential for remediation. Rahim (2018) emphasized that elementary school teachers must adopt varied, contextually

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sensitive, and student-centered reading instruction strategies to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students.

The implications of these findings for educational practice in remote and underserved regions such as Sorong Regency are substantial. Schools must prioritize the establishment of remedial programs, extend instructional time for at-risk readers, and invest in teacher professional development focused on early literacy. Reading assessment and evidence-based intervention strategies. Fatma Rabia et al. (2024) demonstrated that reading literacy development in elementary schools requires a systematic and sustained approach that integrates multiple evidence-based strategies, from phonics instruction to reading comprehension skill-building.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that reading difficulties among upper-grade students at SD Negeri 4, Sorong Regency, are widespread and multifactorial. Among the 28 total upper-grade students, 14 were identified as experiencing significant reading challenges, including difficulty spelling letters, difficulty pronouncing letters and words, letter substitution errors, inattention to punctuation marks, and insufficient letter recognition. These difficulties are attributable to a combination of internal factors, such as insufficient learning motivation and poor memory retention, and external factors, including the influence of the surrounding social environment, the absence of a dedicated school remedial program, and restricted instructional time.

The findings underscore the critical importance of early identification and targeted intervention for students experiencing reading difficulties. Schools are strongly encouraged to establish structured remedial reading programs, allocate additional instructional time for at-risk students, and provide regular professional development for teachers in reading assessment and evidence-based instructional strategies. Future research should examine the long-term effectiveness of specific intervention approaches for reading difficulties in

elementary schools located in 3T (disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost) regions of Indonesia, including phonics-based instruction, multi-sensory reading approaches, and technology-assisted reading support.

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### Declarations

- Author Contribution : Vrits Jen Pier Isoga: Conceptualization, Data Collection, Writing, Original Draft; Supriyati Fatma Rabia: Writing, Review & Editing, Supervision, Validation; Lina Kumalasari: Formal Analysis and Methodology.)
- Funding Statement : This research was conducted independently without external funding.
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