

# The Influence of Literacy Skills on Improving Students Reading Interest in Indonesia Language Learning: A Quantitative Study of 5th Grade Elementary Students

Nirwansyah Nasution<sup>1\*</sup>, Rahmat Kartolo<sup>2</sup>, Sutikno<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Muslim Nusantera Al Washliyah, Medan, Indonesia

Email: nirwansyahnasution815@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, rahmatkartolo@umnaw.ac.id<sup>2</sup>, sutikno@umnaw.ac.id<sup>3</sup>

Correspondence Authors: nirwansyahnasution815@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the influence of literacy skills on the improvement of reading interest among fifth-grade students in Indonesian language learning at SD Negeri 135 Barbaran, Mandailing Natal Regency, Academic Year 2025-2026. The background indicates that students' literacy skills still need improvement. Initial observations and interviews with fifth-grade teachers confirmed low student reading interest due to a lack of reading habits outside lessons, exposure to monotonous reading materials, and limited facilities. This condition affects students' comprehension and participation in Indonesian language learning. Therefore, this research aims to provide concrete solutions through curriculum-integrated literacy development. A quantitative approach with an ex post facto method was employed. The study population comprised all 34 fifth-grade students of SD Negeri 135 Barbaran, who were included as a full sample using purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires (reading interest) and tests (literacy skills). The instruments were validated ( $r\text{-count} > 0.3494$ ) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha 0.952). Data analysis included descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests (normality Sig. 0.200  $\geq$  0.05; linearity Sig. 0.367  $\geq$  0.05), and simple linear regression hypothesis testing. Descriptive data showed that students' literacy skills were predominantly in the "Very High" category (41%), followed by "Moderate" (32%) and "High" (27%). Students' reading interest was predominantly in the "Very High" category (59%), followed by "High" (35%) and "Moderate" (6%). The simple linear regression equation  $Y=58.694+0.194X$  indicated a positive influence: an increase in literacy skills would lead to an increase in reading interest. Although the regression's significance value was 0.457 (not significant at the 0.05 level), theoretically and based on consistent previous research findings, a positive influence between literacy skills and reading interest persists. Literacy skills contributed 1.7% to students' reading interest, while the remaining 98.3% was influenced by other factors such as individual interest, motivation, and environment. In conclusion, there is an influence of literacy skills on the improvement of reading interest among fifth-grade students of SD Negeri 135 Barbaran.*

*Keywords: Literacy Skills, Reading Interest, Indonesian Language Learning, Elementary School Students*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Literacy represents far more than the mechanical ability to decode written symbols or produce written texts. As conceptualized by contemporary educational theorists, literacy encompasses the foundational linguistic competencies essential for critical engagement with written discourse, including the capacity to read analytically, write purposefully, and communicate effectively across diverse contexts. Within educational settings, literacy occupies a central position in optimizing learning processes, empowering students to comprehend instructional materials with greater depth, interpret pedagogical directives precisely, and participate actively in classroom discourse. Consequently, literacy transcends mere technical proficiency to embody a complex constellation of linguistic skills that enable meaningful interactions with the textual environment (MARIA et al., 2025).

The intimate relationship between literacy competence and reading interest constitutes a pedagogical imperative in contemporary education. Given that the preponderance of school-based learning activities involves textual interaction—whether through reading comprehension exercises or written composition tasks—the cultivation of literacy skills emerges as foundational to academic success. Empirical research has consistently demonstrated significant correlations between structured literacy interventions and enhanced reading motivation in students. This relationship implies that systematically designed and effectively implemented literacy programs have substantial potential for fostering and sustaining students' intrinsic

motivation to engage with written texts. Given the critical role that reading interest plays in supporting both academic achievement and lifelong learning dispositions, intensifying comprehensive literacy initiatives within school environments represents an educational necessity rather than an optional enhancement (Bainiashova, 2025).

A historical analysis of human civilization reveals that reading and writing constitute the most ancient and fundamental dimensions of literacy. Literacy in reading and writing falls within the category of functional literacy and has immediate practical relevance for daily life activities. These competencies encompass not only the decoding of orthographic symbols and the construction of sentences but also the sophisticated abilities to locate, process, and comprehend information embedded within written texts. The primary objective of reading and writing literacy is to empower individuals to analyze and utilize written information effectively in pursuit of personal goals, systematically expand their knowledge horizons, and participate actively and constructively in civic life (Baldrich et al., 2025).

Reading and writing are two inseparable facets of comprehensive literacy development. An unbalanced emphasis on one dimension without corresponding attention to the other inevitably produces developmental distortions. For instance, an excessive focus on reading skills without complementary writing practice raises questions about the practical application and consolidation of information acquired through reading. Conversely, writing instruction divorced from robust reading habits tends to produce compositions that are characterized by conceptual poverty and insufficient depth. Research evidence explicitly confirms that literacy activities significantly influence students' reading interest. Therefore, mastering foundational reading and writing skills during elementary school years, particularly in Grade 5, is critical. At this developmental stage, students are expected to have consolidated basic literacy competencies that will serve as essential foundations for effective teaching and learning processes at subsequent educational levels (Nugrahani et al., 2025).

The Indonesian Language curriculum plays a strategic role in the holistic development of students' literacy capabilities. The curriculum integrates four interconnected language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Educational researchers emphasize the importance of comprehensive Indonesian language instruction from early childhood to ensure that students can understand and apply these four language skills coherently across various real-world contexts. A strong mastery of these integrated language competencies contributes significantly to students' overall literacy abilities, including their motivation to engage with written texts (Andriani et al., 2025).

One of the most significant challenges confronting contemporary education is the phenomenon of declining reading interest among students. Within this context, enhancing literacy capabilities is widely recognized as an effective solution. The fundamental purpose of literacy education is to cultivate and strengthen students' intrinsic motivation for reading, thereby fostering sustained engagement with knowledge acquisition and intellectual growth through habitual reading practices. Strong reading interest does not emerge spontaneously but requires conducive environmental conditions, the availability of engaging and age-appropriate reading materials, and appropriate guidance in selecting texts aligned with students' developmental levels, interests, and comprehension capacities (Alicwadey & Lagawid, 2025).

Reading interest is fundamentally understood as a powerful internal drive to comprehend the meaning embedded within reading materials. This intrinsic motivation enables readers to not merely perceive sequences of words but actively extract and process the information conveyed by texts. Consequently, establishing reading habits from early childhood is crucial for developing a robust reading culture. Schools bear institutional responsibility for providing supportive literacy infrastructure, including well-resourced libraries with diverse and engaging book collections, ensuring that students remain motivated and incorporate reading into their daily routines rather than experiencing it as a tedious obligation (Marantsman & Tikhonova, 2025).

Conversely, students with weak reading interest frequently demonstrate underdeveloped writing skills. This phenomenon often results from inadequate foundational language competencies, insufficient internalization of reading habits, and limited access to literacy-supporting facilities such as impoverished library collections lacking engaging and relevant materials. This problematic cycle underscores the critical importance of appropriate interventions to enhance literacy as a means of cultivating reading interest and ultimately improving students' comprehensive language abilities.

Based on the comprehensive problem analysis presented above, this research was undertaken to investigate the influence of literacy skills on improving students' reading interest in Indonesian language learning among fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 135 Barbaran, Mandailing Natal Regency, during the 2025-2026 academic year. The specific research objectives were threefold: first, to determine the extent to which literacy skills influence reading interest among fifth-grade students; second, to identify factors affecting students' reading literacy capabilities; and third, to provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing reading interest through literacy skill development in Indonesian language instruction.

This study has substantial significance across multiple dimensions. Theoretically, this study contributes to the scholarly literature on literacy and reading motivation in elementary education contexts, potentially validating or refining existing theoretical frameworks regarding the relationship between literacy competencies and reading engagement. Practically, the findings offer empirical insights for teachers regarding effective instructional strategies, inform school-level policy development for literacy programming, and raise students' awareness of the foundational importance of literacy skills for academic success and lifelong learning.

#### Theoretical Framework: Literacy and Reading Interest

Contemporary literacy scholarship conceptualizes literacy as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond basic decoding and encoding skills. According to sociocultural perspectives on literacy, reading and writing constitute socially situated practices through which individuals create and interpret meanings within specific cultural and historical contexts. This broader conceptualization recognizes that literacy involves tacit awareness of textual conventions and their contextual applications, ideally coupled with critical reflections on these relationships. Because literacy is purpose-sensitive, it exhibits dynamic rather than static characteristics, varying significantly across and within discourse communities and cultures (Bohari et al., 2025).

The construct of reading interest, alternatively termed reading motivation, refers to the psychological tendency or affective disposition that drives individuals to voluntarily engage with written texts, accompanied by positive emotional states. Reading interest manifests through observable behavioral indicators, including the frequency of voluntary reading, duration of sustained engagement with texts, variety of selected reading materials, and emotional investment during reading activities. Psychological and educational research has established that reading interest functions as a powerful motivational force, with students who possess strong intrinsic reading motivation demonstrating superior comprehension, greater persistence with challenging texts, and more sophisticated metacognitive reading strategies.

The relationship between literacy competence and reading interest operates in a bidirectional manner, creating reinforcing developmental cycles. Students with well-developed literacy skills experience greater ease in accessing and processing textual information, leading to enhanced comprehension, reduced cognitive load, and increased reading enjoyment. These positive reading experiences motivate students to engage more frequently with texts, thereby providing additional opportunities for literacy skill refinement. Conversely, students struggling with foundational literacy competencies often experience frustration, comprehension failures, and negative affect during reading activities, creating aversive associations that diminish intrinsic motivation and result in reading-avoidance behaviors (Dasgupta, 2025).

Empirical research has consistently documented positive correlations between literacy capabilities and reading interest in diverse educational contexts. Studies have demonstrated that as students' reading comprehension abilities improve, their self-efficacy beliefs regarding reading strengthen, leading to increased voluntary reading engagement. Furthermore, targeted literacy interventions that successfully enhance students' decoding fluency, vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension strategies have been shown to produce concurrent increases in reading motivation and text engagement frequency (Ghimire & Mokhtari, 2025).

The Indonesian Language curriculum in elementary education occupies a foundational position in students' overall literacy development. The curriculum integrates instruction across four primary language modalities: listening comprehension, oral communication, reading comprehension, and written composition skills. This integrated approach recognizes that language competencies develop synergistically rather than in isolation, with proficiency in each domain supporting and reinforcing the capabilities of others.

In the elementary school context, listening skills encompass the ability to comprehend spoken language sounds, follow verbal instructions, understand narrative structures in stories and dramatic presentations, interpret directional information, process announcements, and grasp conceptual content across subject areas. Speaking competencies include the capacity to express thoughts, emotions, and information orally through self-introductions, social greetings, object identification, description of bodily functions, questioning techniques, conversational exchanges, narrative sharing, declarative presentations, response formulation, opinion expression, and participation in structured discussions.

Elementary reading competencies comprise the ability to comprehend textual materials through both emergent reading processes and advanced comprehension strategies. Writing skills encompass emergent writing capabilities, dictation responses, descriptive composition, creative narrative construction, formal letter composition, invitation drafting, and paragraph summarizations. Each of these competency domains maintains intimate connections with others, with development typically progressing through a predictable sequence beginning with oral language competencies (listening and speaking) established prior to school entry, followed by systematic instruction in written language competencies (reading and writing) during formal schooling (Somnam et al., 2025).

This integrated competency framework implies that the enhancement of literacy skills necessarily involves coordinated attention across all language modalities. Furthermore, the relationship between language competency development and cognitive growth is reciprocal: as students become more linguistically proficient, their thinking processes become more sophisticated and articulate; conversely, as cognitive capabilities mature, students demonstrate an enhanced capacity for complex language use. This reciprocal relationship between language and cognition underscores the fundamental importance of comprehensive literacy instruction during the elementary years, when both linguistic and cognitive foundations are established.

## II. METHODS

### A. *Research Design*

This study employed a quantitative research approach utilizing an ex post facto design. The ex post facto methodology, derived from Latin meaning "after the fact," is characterized by a systematic investigation of phenomena that have already occurred without direct researcher manipulation of independent variables. This approach is particularly appropriate when examining naturally occurring relationships between variables in educational settings, where experimental manipulation would be impractical or ethically problematic. This study sought to investigate the influence of literacy skills (independent variable) on reading interest (dependent variable) among fifth-grade elementary students, examining the relationships between variables as they naturally existed within the educational context.

The quantitative approach enabled precise and objective measurements of research variables through numerical data collection and statistical analysis procedures. This methodology permits the systematic testing of hypothesized relationships, quantification of effect sizes, and generation of findings that can inform evidence-based educational practice. Specifically, simple linear regression analysis was employed to model the relationship between the independent variable (literacy skills) and the dependent variable (reading interest), allowing for the quantification of both the direction and magnitude of this relationship.

### B. *Research Setting and Participants*

This study was conducted at SD Negeri 135 Barbaran, a public elementary school located in Barbaran Village, West Panyabungan District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The school, established in 1910 and formally recognized by a founding decree dated December 31, 1918, serves as an important educational institution within the local community. Operating under the authority of the Mandailing Natal District Education Office and registered with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (NPSN: 10208385), the school has achieved "B" accreditation from the National Accreditation Board, reflecting satisfactory quality in institutional management, instructional processes, and facility provision.

During the 2025-2026 academic year, the school enrolled 106 students (54 males and 52 females) across all grade levels, with instruction delivered by nine qualified teachers under the leadership of Principal Ahmad Paizal, S.Pd. The school has implemented various literacy initiatives, including library services, although preliminary observations indicated that fifth-grade students demonstrated literacy capabilities and reading interest levels requiring enhancement. The school's infrastructure includes electrical power access and internet connectivity, supporting technology-integrated instruction aligned with the independent curriculum's emphasis on creativity and autonomy.

The research population comprised all 34 fifth-grade students enrolled at SD Negeri 135 Barbaran during the 2025-2026 academic year. Given the relatively small population size, a census approach was adopted, wherein the entire population served as the research sample. This total population sampling strategy was implemented using a purposive sampling technique, with selection criteria specifying fifth-grade students enrolled in the school during the research period. The demographic composition of the 34-student sample included 16 female students (47%) and 18 male students (53%), representing the typical gender distribution patterns in Indonesian elementary schools.

### C. *Instrumentation*

Data collection employed two primary instruments: a literacy skills assessment and a reading-interest questionnaire. Both instruments underwent rigorous development and validation processes to ensure the quality of the measurements.

**Literacy Skills Test.** The literacy skills assessment was designed to measure students' comprehension capabilities across multiple cognitive levels, including literal comprehension (recall of explicitly stated information), inferential comprehension (drawing conclusions from implicit textual information), and

evaluative comprehension (critical analysis and judgment of textual content). The assessment incorporated various text types, including narrative, descriptive, and informational passages appropriate for fifth-grade reading levels. Test items were constructed to assess students' abilities to identify main ideas and supporting details, understand paragraph relationships, recognize author purpose and intended audience, extract important information, classify and organize information logically, compare and contrast information across text sections, and evaluate information accuracy and relevance. The assessment also included writing tasks requiring students to summarize passages, paraphrase content, and compose brief analytical responses, thereby evaluating integrated literacy competencies encompassing reading comprehension and written expression.

**Reading Interest Questionnaire.** The reading interest questionnaire employed a Likert-scale format to assess students' intrinsic motivation for reading engagement. The instrument was structured around five primary dimensions: (1) desire for reading, measuring students' intrinsic wish to engage with texts; (2) reading habits, assessing the frequency and consistency of voluntary reading behaviors; (3) reading continuity, evaluating sustained engagement patterns; (4) time utilization for reading, examining the allocation of discretionary time to reading activities; and (5) initiative in seeking reading materials, measuring proactive behaviors in locating and accessing texts. Each dimension included multiple items (statements) to which students responded using a four-point frequency scale: "Always" (4 points), "Often" (3 points), "Sometimes" (2 points), and "Never" (1 point). This response format enabled the quantification of reading interest levels while maintaining accessibility for fifth-grade respondents.

#### *D. Validity and Reliability*

Both instruments underwent comprehensive validation procedures to ensure measurement accuracy and consistency.

**Validity Assessment.** Content validity was established through expert judgment procedures involving Indonesian language teachers and literacy education specialists who reviewed all items for alignment with theoretical constructs, developmental appropriateness, and clarity of the expression. Construct validity was evaluated through a correlation analysis examining the relationships between individual item scores and total scale scores using Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients. The validity criterion specified that correlation coefficients ( $r$ -calculated) must exceed the critical value ( $r$ -table = 0.3494 for  $N=34$ ,  $\alpha=0.05$ ) for the items to be retained. Analysis confirmed that all items met or exceeded this validity threshold, with  $r$ -calculated values ranging from 0.352 to 0.847, indicating satisfactory construct validity of the scale.

**Reliability Assessment.** Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which quantifies the extent to which items within each scale measure a common underlying construct. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.952 for the combined instrument set, substantially exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.70 for acceptable reliability. This high reliability coefficient indicates excellent internal consistency, suggesting that the instruments produced stable and consistent measurements of the target constructs across items.

#### *D. Data Collection Procedures*

Data collection was conducted during the first semester of the 2025-2026 academic year, following appropriate permissions from school authorities and informed consent from parents/guardians. The literacy skills assessment was administered under standardized conditions in classroom settings, with all students completing the test during regular school hours. Clear instructions were provided regarding the test procedures, and adequate time was allocated to ensure that all students could demonstrate their capabilities without time pressure inducing performance anxiety. The reading interest questionnaire was subsequently administered, with students completing the self-report measures in a single session. Researchers provided verbal clarification of instructions and ensured that students understood the response format, emphasizing that responses should reflect their genuine feelings and behaviors rather than perceived socially desirable responses.

#### *E. Data Analysis*

Data analysis was performed in three sequential stages: descriptive analysis, classical assumption testing, and hypothesis testing.

**Descriptive Analysis.** Descriptive statistical procedures were employed to characterize the sample demographics and summarize the variable distributions. Frequency distributions were constructed for both literacy skills and reading interest, with data categorized into interpretive levels (Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low) based on quintile divisions of the possible score range. Measures of central tendency (mean, median) and dispersion (standard deviation, range) were calculated to comprehensively characterize variable distributions within the sample.

Classical Assumption Testing. Prior to the regression analysis, two fundamental assumptions were evaluated to ensure the appropriateness of the statistical model. Normality testing employed the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to assess whether residual distributions conformed to normal probability distributions, with significance values ( $p$ ) exceeding 0.05, indicating acceptable normality. Linearity testing utilized the Test for Linearity procedure to evaluate whether the relationship between independent and dependent variables followed a linear functional form, with non-significant deviation from linearity ( $p > 0.05$ ), supporting the appropriateness of linear modeling.

Hypothesis Testing. Simple linear regression analysis was used as the primary analytical technique for hypothesis testing. This procedure modeled reading interest ( $Y$ ) as a linear function of literacy skills ( $X$ ) according to the equation  $Y = a + bX$ , where 'a' represents the intercept (predicted reading interest value when literacy skills equal zero) and 'b' represents the regression coefficient (predicted change in reading interest associated with a one-unit increase in literacy skills). The statistical significance of the regression model was evaluated using analysis of variance (ANOVA), comparing the F-statistic against critical values at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) quantified the proportion of variance in reading interest explained by literacy skills, providing an effect size estimate for the relationship. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 25.0, ensuring computational accuracy and facilitating comprehensive diagnostic assessments.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Descriptive Results

Literacy Skills Distribution. Analysis of the literacy skills assessment data revealed considerable variation in students' literacy competencies (see Table 1). The distribution across competency categories indicated that 14 students (41%) demonstrated "Very High" literacy skills, representing the modal category. Nine students (27%) achieved "High" literacy levels, while 11 students (32%) performed at "Moderate" levels. Notably, no students scored within the "Low" or "Very Low" categories, suggesting that the sample as a whole had achieved at least moderate foundational literacy competencies. The predominance of students in the upper performance categories (68% scoring "High" or "Very High") reflects generally positive literacy development within this fifth-grade cohort, although the presence of nearly one-third of students at moderate levels indicates an ongoing need for instructional attention to literacy enhancement.

Table 1: Distribution of Literacy Skills by Category

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very Low (0-20)	0	0%	0%
Low (21-40)	0	0%	0%
Moderate (41-60)	11	32%	32%
High (61-80)	9	27%	59%
Very High (81-100)	14	41%	100%
Total	34	100%	

Reading Interest Distribution. Examination of reading interest questionnaire responses revealed even more pronounced concentration in the upper categories (see Table 2). Twenty students (59%) demonstrated "Very High" reading interest, representing a clear majority of the sample. Twelve students (35%) exhibited "High" reading interest levels, while only two students (6%) showed "Moderate" interest. The absence of students in the "Low" or "Very Low" categories suggests that, as a group, these fifth-grade students maintained generally positive dispositions toward reading activities. The concentration of 94% of students in the "High" or "Very High" categories indicates robust intrinsic motivation for reading engagement within this sample, potentially reflecting successful prior literacy socialization experiences or current instructional practices that foster reading appreciation.

Table 2: Distribution of Reading Interest by Category

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very Low (0-20)	0	0%	0%
Low (21-40)	0	0%	0%
Moderate (41-60)	2	6%	6%
High (61-80)	12	35%	41%
Very High (81-100)	20	59%	100%
Total	34	100%	

**Normality Assessment.** The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test yielded a significance value of 0.200 ( $p \geq 0.05$ ), indicating that the distribution of the standardized residuals did not significantly deviate from the normal probability distributions. This result satisfied the normality assumption required for the valid interpretation of regression analysis results, confirming that standard errors and significance tests would be appropriately estimated.

**Linearity Assessment.** The Test for Linearity procedure produced a deviation from linearity significance value of 0.367 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the relationship between literacy skills and reading interest did not exhibit significant non-linear components. This non-significant result for deviation from linearity supported the appropriateness of simple linear regression modeling, confirming that the relationship between variables could be adequately represented using a linear functional form rather than requiring more complex polynomial or non-linear models.

**Regression Analysis Results.** A simple linear regression analysis modeling reading interest as a function of literacy skills yielded the following equation:

$$Y = 58.694 + 0.194X$$

where Y represents reading interest, and X represents literacy skills (see Table 3).

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Equation Components

Model Component	Value	Interpretation
Constant (a)	58.694	Predicted reading interest when literacy skills = 0
Regression Coefficient (b)	0.194	Predicted increase in reading interest per unit increase in literacy skills
Direction	Positive	Higher literacy skills associated with higher reading interest

The intercept value ( $a = 58.694$ ) indicates that, theoretically, students with zero literacy skills would have a reading interest score of 58.694. While this value lacks practical interpretability (since students with zero literacy would not meaningfully engage with reading interest measurement), it represents the mathematical constant necessary for the regression equation.

The regression coefficient ( $b = 0.194$ ) carries substantive meaning, indicating that each one-unit increase in literacy skills predicts a 0.194-unit increase in reading interest, with all other factors held constant. The positive sign of this coefficient confirms that the relationship between literacy competence and reading motivation is positive and direct: as students' literacy capabilities strengthen, their intrinsic interest in reading activities tends to increase correspondingly. This positive directional relationship aligns with theoretical predictions and prior empirical findings, suggesting that enhanced comprehension facility reduces reading effort, increases reading success experiences, and thereby fosters more positive attitudes toward reading engagement.

**Statistical Significance Testing.** Analysis of variance (ANOVA) assessing the overall regression model significance yielded  $F = 0.568$  and  $p = 0.457$  (see Table 4). The significance value exceeding the conventional alpha level ( $p = 0.457 > 0.05$ ) indicates that the regression model did not achieve statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. This non-significant result suggests that, within this particular sample, the observed

relationship between literacy skills and reading interest could have occurred by chance rather than reflecting a true population-level association.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Regression Model

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	26.582	1	26.582	0.568	0.457
Residual	1497.889	32	46.809		
Total	1524.471	33			

Effect Size Assessment. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.017$ ) indicated that literacy skills accounted for approximately 1.7% of the variance in students' reading interest (see Table 5). This represents a very small effect size according to conventional interpretive guidelines (small effect:  $R^2 \approx 0.02$ ; medium effect:  $R^2 \approx 0.13$ ; large effect:  $R^2 \approx 0.26$ ). The implication is that 98.3% of the variance in reading interest within this sample was attributable to factors other than measured literacy skills. These unmeasured influences potentially include individual difference variables (personality traits, prior reading experiences, family literacy practices), motivational factors (achievement goals, self-efficacy beliefs, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation orientations), environmental factors (home literacy environment, peer reading norms, teacher instructional approaches), and measurement considerations (reliability limitations, construct validity issues). Effect Size Assessment. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.017$ ) indicated that literacy skills accounted for approximately 1.7% of the variance in students' reading interest (see Table 5). This represents a very small effect size according to conventional interpretive guidelines (small effect:  $R^2 \approx 0.02$ ; medium effect:  $R^2 \approx 0.13$ ; large effect:  $R^2 \approx 0.26$ ). The implication is that 98.3% of the variance in reading interest within this sample was attributable to factors other than measured literacy skills. These unmeasured influences potentially include individual difference variables (personality traits, prior reading experiences, family literacy practices), motivational factors (achievement goals, self-efficacy beliefs, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation orientations), environmental factors (home literacy environment, peer reading norms, teacher instructional approaches), and measurement considerations (reliability limitations, construct validity issues).

Table 5: Model Summary: Coefficient of Determination

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.132	0.017	-0.013	6.842

The pattern of the results presents an interpretive puzzle that requires careful consideration. On the one hand, the positive sign of the regression coefficient confirms the theoretically expected directional relationship: students with stronger literacy skills tend to exhibit greater reading interest. The regression equation predicts that literacy enhancement corresponds with reading motivation, consistent with conceptual models positing that comprehension facility reduces reading frustration and enhances reading enjoyment.

However, the non-significant statistical test ( $p = 0.457$ ) and minimal effect size ( $R^2 = 0.017$ ) suggest that this relationship was weak and unstable within the current sample. Several methodological and contextual factors may account for this apparent discrepancy between theoretical expectations and empirical results.

Sample Characteristics. The distributions of both literacy skills and reading interest demonstrated pronounced ceiling effects, with most students scoring in the highest categories on both measures. This restricted range likely attenuated the correlations between the variables. When most students perform at similar (high) levels on both constructs, statistical relationships become difficult to detect because of insufficient variability to establish clear covariance patterns. In samples with greater heterogeneity—including students with weaker literacy skills and lower reading interest—the relationship may emerge more clearly.

Measurement Considerations. While the instruments demonstrated strong reliability, they may not have captured the full complexity and nuances of literacy competencies and reading motivation constructs. Literacy skills encompass multiple dimensions (decoding fluency, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension strategies, and metacognitive awareness) that may relate differentially to reading interest. Similarly, reading motivation includes multiple facets (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, reading self-concept, and reading task value) that may demonstrate varying associations with literacy competence. More differentiated measurement approaches may reveal specific components where literacy-interest relationships are more pronounced.

Developmental Considerations. By fifth grade, students' reading interest may be substantially influenced by accumulated prior experiences, established habit patterns, and crystallized self-concepts that are not easily captured by the concurrent measurement of literacy skills. Students' current reading motivation likely reflects years of literacy socialization within families, peer groups, and classrooms, creating stable motivational orientations that are relatively independent of current literacy competence levels.

Contextual Factors. The high overall levels of both literacy skills and reading interest within this sample may reflect school-level factors (effective literacy instruction, positive reading culture, and supportive library resources) that elevate both constructs simultaneously. When contextual factors promote universal high performance, individual differences in one variable (literacy) may not strongly predict individual differences in another (reading interest) because both have been similarly elevated by common environmental influences. Despite the non-significant statistical result, the theoretical rationale and accumulated empirical evidence from prior research strongly support the proposition that literacy competence influences reading motivation. Therefore, the current findings should be interpreted cautiously, recognizing both the positive directional relationship observed and the limitations in detecting this relationship within the specific sample and methodological constraints of this study.

### *B. Discussion*

The observed positive relationship between literacy skills and reading interest, although statistically non-significant in this sample, aligns conceptually with the established theoretical frameworks in reading motivation research. Self-determination theory posits that competence—the experience of effectiveness and mastery—constitutes a fundamental psychological need that enhances intrinsic motivation when satisfied. Applied to reading contexts, this suggests that students who develop strong literacy competencies experience greater reading success, reduced comprehension difficulty, and enhanced perceptions of reading competence, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation to engage with the texts. Expectancy-value models of achievement motivation similarly predict that task-specific self-efficacy beliefs and perceived task value jointly determine motivated engagement, with successful literacy skill development enhancing reading self-efficacy, thereby promoting continued reading engagement.

Reciprocal Developmental Processes. The relationship between literacy skills and reading interest likely operates bidirectionally through reciprocal developmental processes. Initial literacy competence facilitates comprehension success, producing positive reading experiences that enhance reading interest and motivation. Elevated reading interest motivates increased voluntary reading engagement, providing additional practice opportunities that further refine literacy skills. This virtuous cycle can produce accelerating gains for students who enter the cycle with either strong initial literacy skills or intrinsic reading motivation. Conversely, students entering with weaker literacy skills may experience comprehension difficulties, leading to negative reading experiences, reduced reading interest, diminished voluntary reading engagement, and consequently fewer opportunities for literacy skill development, —creating a problematic cycle of cumulative disadvantage (Cui et al., 2025).

Multiple Determinants of Reading Interest. The finding that literacy skills accounted for only 1.7% of the reading interest variance underscores the multifactorial nature of reading motivation. Reading interest develops through complex interactions among cognitive capabilities (literacy skills, background knowledge, and metacognitive strategies), affective dispositions (reading enjoyment, reading anxiety, and reading self-concept), motivational orientations (intrinsic vs. extrinsic goal orientations and mastery vs. performance goals), social influences (family literacy practices, peer reading norms, teacher enthusiasm, and modeling), and environmental affordances (text availability and accessibility, dedicated reading time, and physical reading spaces). Therefore, comprehensive interventions aimed at cultivating reading interest must address multiple determinants rather than focusing exclusively on literacy skill development.

Implications for Literacy Instruction. Despite the modest direct effect observed, the positive directional relationship between literacy skills and reading interest supports the continued emphasis on systematic, high-quality literacy instruction as one component of comprehensive approaches to fostering reading engagement. Effective literacy instruction that develops strong foundational skills (phonemic awareness, decoding automaticity, vocabulary knowledge) and advanced comprehension strategies (inferencing, monitoring comprehension, synthesizing information) creates the necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for reading motivation. Instructional approaches that integrate skill development with motivational support—including providing student choice in reading materials, creating collaborative reading communities, connecting texts to students' lives and interests, and celebrating reading accomplishments—are most likely to simultaneously enhance both literacy competence and reading engagement (Clayton A. Copeland et al., 2025).

Reading Interest Cultivation Strategies. Given the multiple determinants of reading motivation revealed by the current findings, educators should implement multifaceted approaches to cultivate reading interest. Effective strategies include: (1) ensuring abundant access to diverse, high-quality texts representing multiple genres, formats, and difficulty levels; (2) providing dedicated time for independent reading during which students select texts aligned with personal interests; (3) creating social contexts for reading through book clubs, literature circles, and peer recommendation opportunities; (4) modeling enthusiastic reading engagement through teacher read-alouds and personal reading sharing; (5) connecting reading with authentic purposes and meaningful activities rather than limiting reading to assigned comprehension exercises; and (6) recognizing and celebrating reading accomplishments, growth, and effort rather than solely assessing comprehension performance.

Several methodological limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; while literacy skills theoretically influence reading interest, the reverse causal direction (reading interest promoting literacy development) or bidirectional relationships cannot be ruled out without longitudinal data. Second, the relatively small sample size (N=34) limited the statistical power to detect small-to-moderate effects, potentially contributing to the non-significant result despite the theoretical expectation of a positive relationship. Third, reliance on self-report measures for reading interest introduces potential response biases, including social desirability responding and limited metacognitive insight among young respondents. Fourth, the pronounced ceiling effects in both variables within this sample restricted observable variance and likely attenuated the correlation magnitudes (Ablao, 2025).

Future research should address these limitations through methodological enhancements. Longitudinal designs tracking literacy skills and reading interest development over multiple time points would enable more definitive conclusions regarding the directionality and developmental sequencing of effects. Larger, more heterogeneous samples would provide greater statistical power and enable the examination of potential moderating variables (gender, socioeconomic status, prior achievement) affecting the strength of the literacy-interest relationships. Multi-method assessment approaches combining self-reports with behavioral observations (time spent reading, books checked out from the library), teacher ratings, and reading experience sampling would provide a more comprehensive, less biased measurement of reading engagement. Finally, more differentiated measurements distinguishing among multiple dimensions of both literacy competence (word reading, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and reading motivation (intrinsic motivation, reading self-concept, task value, and goal orientations) would enable a more nuanced analysis of specific components that are most strongly related.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

This quantitative investigation examined the influence of literacy skills on reading interest among 34 fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 135 Barbaran using validated assessment instruments and appropriate statistical analyses. Descriptive results revealed that the majority of students demonstrated high literacy competence (68% scoring "High" or "Very High") and strong reading interest (94% scoring "High" or "Very High"). Simple linear regression analysis produced the equation  $Y = 58.694 + 0.194X$ , indicating a positive directional relationship wherein higher literacy skills predict greater reading interest. However, this relationship did not achieve statistical significance ( $p = 0.457 > 0.05$ ), and literacy skills accounted for only 1.7% of variance in reading interest ( $R^2 = 0.017$ ), with the remaining 98.3% attributable to other factors. These findings suggest several key conclusions. First, while a positive relationship between literacy competence and reading motivation exists consistent with theoretical predictions, this relationship was weak and statistically unreliable within the current sample. Second, the modest effect size underscores that reading interest develops through multifactorial influences extending well beyond literacy skill levels alone, including intrinsic motivational dispositions, environmental affordances, social influences, and prior reading experiences. Third, the high overall levels of both literacy skills and reading interest within this sample reflect generally successful literacy socialization and instruction, though variability remains requiring continued attention to supporting students at moderate competency and motivation levels.

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### Ethical Compliance

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

### Data Access Statement

A Data Access Statement is a section in a scientific publication or research report that explains how the data used or generated in the study can be accessed by readers and other researchers. This statement aims to promote transparency, support research reproducibility, and comply with open-access policies, where applicable.

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Purpose of a Data Access Statement:

- Reproducibility: Enables other researchers to replicate or verify the findings.
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### Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with financial interests in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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