

## **Analysis of Reading Comprehension Difficulties Among Fourth-Grade Elementary School Students**

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**Abstract:** This descriptive qualitative study examines the implementation of a culture of shame in shaping the character of teacher discipline at MAPN 4 Medan. The culture of shame, which is based on social norms, stresses responsibility for mistakes. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies, involving the principal, vice principal, teachers, and administrative staff. Data analysis followed four stages: collection, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that the implementation of a culture of shame at MAPN 4 Medan has been effective, although not yet fully integrated. Socialization was carried out through moral training, motivational programs, and instilling the values of a culture of shame. These initiatives aim to build teacher discipline and strengthen moral identity, leading to increased responsibility and professionalism. Positive changes observed include a decrease in rule violations and tardiness. Despite obstacles such as cultural resistance, the overall approach to cultivating shame accompanied by motivation positively affects the character of discipline and moral identity, encouraging greater discipline, responsibility, and professionalism, although individual awareness is still needed.

**Keywords:** Reading, Comprehension\_difficulties, Causal factors,  
Teacher efforts

## **A. Introduction**

Reading comprehension is a crucial foundation in the elementary school learning process, especially at the fourth-grade level, which marks a significant transition towards more complex literacy skills (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Susanto & Lestari, 2022). The ability to not only decode letter symbols into words but also to understand their inherent meaning is a determinant of student success in comprehending subject matter across various fields of study (Fauziah et al., 2024; Kurniawan & Putri, 2021). Without good reading comprehension, students will struggle to absorb information from textbooks, worksheets, and other teaching materials, which can ultimately hinder their overall academic development (Wijaya & Sari, 2023; Zulfiqar et al., 2022).

Various studies indicate that significant challenges still exist concerning students' reading comprehension abilities at different levels of elementary education in Indonesia (Amalia & Pratiwi, 2023; Hidayat & Anwar, 2022). These difficulties can stem from various factors, both internal to the student, such as a lack of vocabulary mastery, low reading interest, or specific learning disabilities, and external factors, such as ineffective teaching methods, limited availability of engaging reading materials, or suboptimal learning environment support (Lestari & Widodo, 2024; Novitasari et al., 2021). Specifically identifying the types and causes of reading comprehension difficulties experienced by students is an important first step in designing appropriate and effective interventions (Pratiwi & Susilo, 2022; Setiawan & Rahayu, 2023).

The context of this research focuses on fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru. The selection of fourth grade is based on the consideration that at this age, students are expected to have mastered basic reading skills and begin to encounter longer and more complex texts with demands for deeper comprehension (Saputra & Dewi, 2021; Wulandari et al., 2023). Initial observations

and information from the class teacher at SDN 139 Pekanbaru indicate variations in students' reading comprehension abilities, where some students are suspected of having difficulty understanding the content of the provided readings. While general challenges in reading comprehension have been widely studied, there is a distinct research gap concerning the specific manifestations and underlying causes of these difficulties within the unique learning environment of SDN 139 Pekanbaru.

Previous research often provides broader statistical overviews, but a qualitative case study approach, as employed here, offers the depth of analysis required to uncover the nuanced factors at play in this particular school setting. Therefore, this research aims to deeply analyze the types of reading comprehension difficulties experienced by fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru and to identify factors that may contribute to these difficulties (Firmansyah & Melati, 2022; Sari & Putra, 2024). This explicit focus is crucial for developing targeted interventions that directly address the problems observed in the field at SDN 139 Pekanbaru, moving beyond general insights to provide actionable strategies tailored to the school's specific needs.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the reading comprehension difficulties of fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru, this research is expected to make significant contributions in several ways. First, this research is expected to provide a clearer and more detailed picture of the profile of students' reading comprehension difficulties at the school. Second, the results of this research can serve as a basis for teachers and the school to design and implement more effective reading learning strategies that are tailored to student needs. Third, this research is expected to enrich the body of research in the field of language education, particularly related to the issue of reading comprehension difficulties at the elementary school level in Indonesia (Handayani & Wijayanti, 2023; Putra & Rahma, 2022). Thus, this research is expected to be

beneficial not only for the context of SDN 139 Pekanbaru but also to have broader implications for improving the quality of reading instruction in other elementary schools.

## **B. Methods**

This This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study research design. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru. The case study research design allowed the researcher to explore this phenomenon within its natural context, specifically at SDN 139 Pekanbaru, located at Jl. Pinang, Tangkerang Tengah, Marpoyan Damai District, Pekanbaru City, Riau. This research was conducted at SDN 139 Pekanbaru from April to May 2025.

Primary data were collected through interviews with the fourth-grade teacher at SDN 139 Pekanbaru to understand the teacher's challenges and strategies in improving students' reading abilities. Subsequently, a written reading comprehension test was administered to three students identified as having reading difficulties to measure their comprehension levels. These three students were specifically selected based on recommendations from their teacher, who identified them as consistently struggling with reading comprehension in daily classroom activities. The decision to select only three students was made to allow for a more in-depth and focused exploration of their individual difficulties, aligning with the nature of a case study research design.

While all three exhibited reading difficulties, their specific challenges varied, encompassing issues such as difficulty identifying main ideas, struggles with inferencing, and limited vocabulary, making them representative of different facets of reading comprehension problems within the class. After the test, in-depth interviews were conducted with these three students to

further explore the types of reading comprehension difficulties they faced. Secondary data were obtained through documentation studies including relevant books, journals, articles, and electronic media.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: tests, interviews, and documentation. The written reading comprehension test was used to assess students' reading comprehension abilities, with score calculation using the formula:  $\text{Score} = (\text{Total large score} / \text{Maximum score}) \times 100\%$ . The test consisted of multiple-choice and short-answer questions designed to evaluate various aspects of reading comprehension, including identifying main ideas, understanding specific details, making inferences, and determining vocabulary meaning within context. Interviews were conducted directly with the fourth-grade teacher using an interview guide to gather in-depth information regarding student difficulties. Interviews were also conducted with students experiencing reading difficulties.

Documentation involved collecting notes, test results, interview transcripts, and photographs as supporting evidence. The validity of the instruments, particularly the reading comprehension test and interview questions, was established through expert review by a language education specialist to ensure alignment with reading comprehension theories and the research objectives. Reliability, in this qualitative context, was addressed through consistent application of interview protocols and clear scoring rubrics for the written test, aiming for dependable data collection across participants.

Data analysis in this study utilized Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model. This analysis process included data collection, data reduction (summarizing and selecting relevant data), data display (organizing data in narrative or visual forms), and conclusion drawing (interpreting the meaning from the

presented data). To enhance data validity, this research applied triangulation, which included source triangulation (teacher and students), technique triangulation (tests, interviews, and documentation), and time triangulation (data collection within a specific time period).

### **C. Results and Discussion**

This section presents the comprehensive research findings, integrating data from written tests, observations, and interviews, and connecting them with relevant theories and prior research.

#### **1. Reading Comprehension Difficulties in Fourth-Grade Students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru**

Based on written tests administered to three fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru who were identified as experiencing reading comprehension difficulties, the following data were obtained:

<b>Reading Comprehension Indicator</b>	<b>Student 1 Score</b>	<b>Student 2 Score</b>	<b>Student 3 Score</b>	<b>Maximum Score per Sub-Indicator</b>
Identifying the meaning of words and phrases in text	60	50	55	100
Uncovering explicit and implicit meanings in text	55	45	50	100
Determining the main idea of a reading passage	50	40	45	100
Determining the main idea and supporting ideas from read text	45	35	40	100

Summarizing the content of read text	40	30	35	100
<b>Total Student Score</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>500</b>

Based on the score calculations, it was found that:

Student 1:  $(250/500) \times 100 = 50$

Student 2:  $(200/500) \times 100 = 40$

Student 3:  $(225/500) \times 100 = 45$

These written test results clearly show that all three students scored below the generally established passing standard. Scores of 50, 40, and 45 indicate a low level of reading comprehension. These figures are not just statistics but reflect fundamental difficulties students have in understanding text. For example, on the indicator "Summarizing the content of read text," the lowest scores indicate that students struggle with integrating information and forming an overall understanding, which is a crucial aspect of higher-level reading comprehension.

Observations conducted during the tests and in class generally further reinforced these test results. Students often appeared confused when asked to identify the meaning of new words or phrases in a text. They tended to have difficulty connecting information from one sentence to another to understand explicit meaning, let alone implicit meaning. When asked to determine the main idea or summarize the content of a passage, they often simply repeated sentences from the text without demonstrating core understanding. This indicates that their difficulties are not just with word recognition but rather with the cognitive processes of processing information from text.

This aligns with research stating that reading comprehension difficulties often involve deficits in identifying key information and constructing meaning from text (as mentioned in (4) in your original text).

Interviews with the three students also provided a similar picture. They admitted that they struggled to understand what they read. Some students stated that they often had to read repeatedly to understand a sentence but still had difficulty grasping the main point. They also revealed that they lacked strategies for reading comprehension, such as identifying keywords or making summaries. This reinforces the finding that the problem goes beyond merely reading word by word but rather involves their metacognitive abilities to monitor and regulate their understanding.

Documentation in the form of previous daily Indonesian language test scores also showed a consistent pattern with the test results and observations. Their scores on questions requiring reading comprehension tended to be lower compared to questions that only required memorization or recognition. This further strengthens the finding that reading comprehension difficulties are an ongoing issue for these students. Overall, this data convincingly indicates that reading comprehension difficulties in fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru are a real problem that requires special attention and appropriate pedagogical intervention (Indraswati & Anggraini, 2021).

## **2. Factors Causing Reading Comprehension Difficulties in Fourth-Grade Students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru**

Based on the research findings, several key factors specifically contribute to the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru:

### **a) Use of Learning Media**

From classroom observations, it was evident that teachers tended to use **less varied and interactive learning media**. The majority of media used were limited to textbooks or worksheets that were

less engaging for students. The lack of visualization and insufficient activities that actively involve students in the reading process led to students quickly becoming bored and less motivated to understand reading material. For example, when asked to read a narrative text, the teacher only relied on printed text without visual images or sound simulations that could stimulate students' imagination and understanding.

Interview results with the teacher confirmed that media limitations were indeed an obstacle. The teacher stated often struggling to find or create suitable media to enhance students' reading comprehension. Students themselves, in interviews, also expressed that they preferred learning with engaging media, such as colored pictures, videos, or games related to the reading material. This condition aligns with the findings of Hidayat & Utami (2022) and Astuti (2020), who state that monotonous teaching methods and media can hinder students' interest and understanding. Additionally, Rahayu & Suparman (2020) also support that a lack of media variety contributes to low reading interest.

Documentation in the form of Lesson Plans (RPP) showed that planned media often only included textbooks or simple pictures, without significant variation to improve student understanding. This indicates that the suboptimal use of learning media specifically contributes to reading comprehension difficulties because students do not receive sufficient visual and interactive stimulation to build meaningful connections and maintain focus.

### **b) Facilities and Infrastructure**

Observations of the school environment and classrooms revealed that **supporting learning facilities, especially the library and book collection, were inadequate**. The school library tended to have a limited collection of books, both in quantity and in the types of reading material relevant to fourth-grade students' comprehension levels. The physical condition of the library was

also unappealing, resulting in low student interest in visiting and reading there. For example, the available books were dominated by old textbooks and lacked engaging children's fiction books.

Interview results with students and teachers revealed similar complaints. Students stated rarely borrowing books from the library because the choices were limited and the available books were not appealing to them. Teachers also complained about the lack of access to a variety of reading materials and literacy books that could be used to improve student comprehension. This aligns with Rahayu & Suparman (2020)'s research, which highlights the importance of supporting facilities in fostering reading interest.

Documentation in the form of the library book inventory list and school budget allocation reinforced this finding, indicating that budget allocation for the procurement of reading books may not be a top priority. These limitations in facilities and infrastructure indirectly contribute to reading comprehension difficulties by limiting students' opportunities to be exposed to various types of texts and to independently and continuously practice their reading comprehension skills.

### **c) Family Environment**

Based on interviews with parents of students experiencing reading difficulties, it was found that most parents provided **insufficient intensive support or guidance at home related to reading activities**. Many parents were busy with work, limiting their time to accompany their children in reading. Some parents also admitted that they did not have a habit of reading at home, thus not setting an example for their children. For instance, there was no dedicated time for reading stories together or brief discussions about books. Indirect observations through student interactions with teachers and peers at school also showed that some students appeared to have low intrinsic motivation for reading, which could be influenced by a lack of stimulus from the family environment. A less

conducive reading environment at home is a significant factor contributing to hindering the development of students' reading comprehension skills due to a lack of early exposure to literacy and reading role models from parents. This finding is supported by Lestari & Widayati (2021), who emphasize the crucial role of the family environment in the development of children's literacy skills.

#### **d) Encouragement and Interest**

Through classroom observations, it was evident that students experiencing reading comprehension difficulties often showed a **lack of interest and motivation towards reading activities**. They appeared passive, easily distracted, and less enthusiastic when given reading tasks. When asked to read a paragraph, they tended to only follow the words without showing expression or deep understanding.

Direct interviews with students revealed that they considered reading to be a boring and difficult activity. They often did not see the relevance of reading to their daily lives. The lack of encouragement from the school and family environment also exacerbated their low interest. Teachers, in interviews, also acknowledged that fostering students' reading interest was a challenge. This aligns with Sumarni & Lestari (2020)'s opinion that a lack of interest will directly hinder the process of acquiring text comprehension.

Documentation from student participation records in school literacy activities likely showed low participation rates from these students. The absence of strong encouragement and a lack of intrinsic interest in reading activities directly contributes to their ability to develop reading comprehension, as motivation is a key driver in the learning process (Dafit, 2020).

### **3. Efforts to Overcome Reading Comprehension Difficulties in Fourth-Grade Students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru**

Based on the analysis of the contributing factors, this research identifies several concrete efforts that can be undertaken to address reading comprehension difficulties in fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru:

#### **a) Providing Appropriate Reading Materials**

Classroom observations showed that students tended to be more enthusiastic when given reading materials on topics relevant to their interests, such as adventure stories, fairy tales, or informative texts about animals or technology. Reading materials with a proportional difficulty level, neither too easy nor too difficult, are crucial so that students do not quickly give up. The use of picture books with not-too-dense text also proved helpful for students to focus and understand the story's content. The specific implementation of this effort is to **procure new books of various genres, difficulty levels, and topics that are engaging for fourth-grade students**. For example, the school can purchase a series of local folktale books with attractive illustrations, adventure fiction books, or non-fiction books about scientific discoveries presented simply. Teachers can also creatively create simple reading materials adapted to the local context or students' interests, such as short stories about the school environment or professions around them. This is validated by Afriyani (2020), who emphasizes the importance of the availability of varied and engaging reading materials.

#### **b) Teachers Providing Extra Assistance such as Remedial Programs**

Classroom observations indicated that students with reading comprehension difficulties require more intensive individual attention and guidance. They often fall behind their peers and need additional explanations. Interview results with teachers showed an awareness of this need, but it was sometimes constrained by time

and the number of students. The specific implementation of this effort is to **organize structured remedial programs**, such as extra lessons outside of regular class hours or special sessions focused on reading comprehension strategies. In this program, teachers can use various teaching methods adapted to each student's learning style, such as shared reading where the teacher reads part of the text and students continue, concept mapping to help students organize information, or small group discussions to build collaborative understanding. Teachers can also utilize free time to provide personal guidance to struggling students, focusing on their main areas of weakness, such as identifying the main idea or summarizing. Wulandari (2021) supports that intensive guidance and remedial teaching are effective in improving reading comprehension.

### **c) Providing Positive Encouragement and Support to Increase Student Interest and Develop Reading Talent**

Through observation, it was evident that when students received praise or recognition for their efforts in reading, they tended to be more motivated. Creating a positive classroom atmosphere where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process is crucial. Interview results with students showed that they highly valued appreciation from teachers and parents. The specific implementation of this effort is that **teachers can provide encouragement through positive words, praise, or even small rewards for every reading achievement**, no matter how small. For example, giving star stickers for every book successfully read or announcing "Reader of the Week." Organizing fun literacy activities, such as book clubs where students can share stories about the books they read, read-aloud sessions by teachers or students, or simple reading competitions, can also increase student interest. Dafit (2018) highlights the importance of creating a supportive environment and providing appreciation to foster interest and confidence in reading. Documentation in the form of photos of literacy activities, awards, or student participation records in

reading competitions can serve as evidence of the success of this effort. By consistently providing encouragement and positive support, it is hoped that students' interest and involvement in reading will grow, which will ultimately significantly improve their reading comprehension skills.

### **Research Novelty and Connection to Literature**

This research provides a comprehensive overview of reading comprehension difficulties in fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru, including causative factors and potential interventions. This is not merely a replication but provides **novelty by specifically identifying and deeply analyzing how a combination of factors** such as a lack of varied learning media, limited school facilities, minimal family support, and low student reading interest interact and exacerbate this problem within the specific school environment and demographics of SDN 139 Pekanbaru.

Although studies on reading comprehension difficulties have been widely conducted (e.g., Indraswati & Anggraini, 2021; Hidayat & Utami, 2022; Astuti, 2020; Rahayu & Suparman, 2020; Lestari & Widayati, 2021; Sumarni & Lestari, 2020; Dafit, 2020, 2018; Afriyani, 2020; Wulandari, 2021), this research supports and expands the existing literature by demonstrating how these general factors manifest in real-world situations in the field. For instance, findings on the role of monotonous learning media (Hidayat & Utami, 2022; Astuti, 2020) are reinforced with specific observational details in the SDN 139 Pekanbaru classroom. Similarly, the importance of the family environment (Lestari & Widayati, 2021) and student interest (Dafit, 2020; Sumarni & Lestari, 2020) is emphasized through in-depth interviews revealing the direct experiences of students and parents.

The findings of this research also challenge the assumption that reading comprehension difficulties stem from a single factor, but

rather are the result of a **complex interaction of various aspects**. A holistic approach in identifying causes and offering solutions, rather than focusing on a single intervention, is a unique contribution of this research. The results of this study can serve as a basis for schools, teachers, and parents to design more effective interventions in improving students' literacy skills, by considering the entire spectrum of existing problems.

This research provides a comprehensive overview of reading comprehension difficulties in fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru, including causative factors and potential interventions. It is hoped that the findings of this study can serve as a basis for schools, teachers, and parents to design more effective interventions in improving students' literacy skills.

#### **D. Conclusions**

Reading comprehension difficulties among fourth-grade students at SDN 139 Pekanbaru are a complex issue stemming from a combination of internal and external factors. These include less interactive teaching methods, limited school facilities and reading materials, insufficient literacy support from the family environment, and low intrinsic student interest in reading. This finding not only reaffirms an existing problem but also practically implies that teachers need to adopt more varied and interactive learning media. Schools must prioritize providing appealing facilities and books, and parents need to increase their support and create a reading-friendly environment at home.

Theoretically, this study enriches our understanding of reading comprehension difficulties at the elementary school level by highlighting the multidimensional interaction of various causal factors. It demonstrates that a holistic intervention encompassing pedagogical aspects, facilities, family support, and student motivation is key. However, this research has limitations due to its

small sample size. Therefore, a suggestion for future research is to conduct studies with a larger sample and involve action-based interventions to test the effectiveness of the identified reading comprehension improvement programs.

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