



Are Elementary School Library Books Appropriate? A Content Analysis of Children's Books

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Abstract

In the current digital era, children's interest in reading still needs to be increased. One effort to increase children's interest in reading is by providing quality books in school libraries. This study aims to analyze the quality of children's reading book collections in elementary school libraries in Bandung. This study evaluates the suitability of library books in several elementary schools in Bandung using a content analysis research method created in the form of a rubric with four basic criteria including: book familiarity, book language, textual support, and cultural suitability. It is hoped that the results of this evaluation can serve as reference material for library staff, teachers, school management, and principals in selecting and expanding the collection of children's reading books in their school libraries to meet predetermined criteria. By doing so, it is hoped that the quality of children's reading books in school libraries can be improved and provide greater benefits for students, thereby contributing to the development of children's literacy in Indonesia. The results of content analysis research show that 71% of children's reading books in elementary school libraries in Bandung meet the criteria, with details as follows: 73% for book familiarity, 73% textual support, 70% for cultural suitability, 68% for book language. However, unfortunately, these resources have not been fully utilized by library visitors, indicating a need for more extensive school programs to increase children's interest in reading. It is important to note that this study only took several children's reading books found in elementary school libraries in Bandung, and further research is needed on this matter.

Keywords: Elementary school library books, Content analysis of children's literature, Appropriateness of children's books, Educational content in children's literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Children in the Past and Their Love of Books in the Pre-Digital Era

Before the digital era of the 21st century, children grew up in a vastly different world. Technology such as smartphones, tablets, and the internet did not yet exist, and their main entertainment came from books. In the past, reading books was a very popular activity for children. They spent hours immersed in fantastic stories, exciting adventures, and new knowledge contained in the pages of books. Reading became the primary source of entertainment, opening a window to a world full of imagination and enriching their horizons.

Libraries and bookstores were favorite places for children to find new books. Browsing the bookshelves filled with various titles and genres, they hunted for stories that were interesting and matched their interests. The calm atmosphere and distinctive aroma of books in libraries and bookstores provided an unforgettable experience for book lovers. Reading was not only an individual activity but also a fun social activity. Parents and grandparents often told stories to children, awakening their imaginations and strengthening relationships among family members. This storytelling tradition was a means of conveying moral and cultural values to future generations.

Consistently reading books encouraged children's creativity and imagination. They were inspired by the stories they read, and their imaginations thrived as they envisioned the worlds depicted in the books. This helped them develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. Reading books in the pre-digital era had many positive impacts on children. Apart from improving literacy skills and enriching knowledge, reading also helped them develop various soft skills such as empathy, communication, and problem-solving abilities.

Books are a valuable source of knowledge that children are interested in, partly because they have not yet been influenced by today's technology. Thus, it is common to say that books are a bridge to the world's knowledge. In the past, children read various books not only as a source of knowledge but also as a way to fill their free time. In the 21st century, the ability to read is one of the fundamental skills that children

who attend elementary school should possess. It is important for children to get used to reading and comprehending text. Getting used to reading is the first step toward building useful habits [1].

Helping children comprehend (understand) reading content, either individually or in small groups, can strengthen the foundation of their reading skills [2]. Elementary school-aged children must still be accompanied by adults around them, whether they are teachers at school or parents at home, to be able to comprehend the contents of books. This is especially important because parents play a crucial role in instilling reading habits in children from an early age [3].

As previously mentioned, the importance of reading for children is closely related to their future lives as adults. Students' reading skills and overall happiness are important factors that determine their quality of life [4]. The strategy of using learning action plans for reading comprehension can lead children to a higher level of reading comprehension [5]. With increased comprehension, children will have broader knowledge and will be more confident and enthusiastic about developing themselves

and improving their abilities. By using metacognitive strategies and reading quality children's reading books, they can effectively build and strengthen their memories [6].

The assessment of the design quality of children's reading books is related to the physical aspects of the book [6]. Children often choose the books they want to read based on the book's physical appearance. When they visit the school library, they first notice the book's physical features, then they will read the book title they want according to their choice. The books we choose and how we display them reveal something about our personality [7].

It is very important to know the quality of the reading books in the school library because the library's collection is what students will read. There are four criteria and questions for considering and selecting reading materials [8], namely familiarity with the content of the text in the book, suitability of the language in the book for the child, textual support, and suitability of the cultural background contained in the book with the child's daily life.

Early childhood literacy and education programs must consider varying book content according to the child's background and provide easy access to various types of books [9]. Variations in textbook content involve the way different elements that make up the book are presented. These elements should be organized neatly and logically to make students interested in learning using the textbook [10].

In this study, the authors analyzed several children's reading books from the school library to address the following research questions:

1. Is the quality of the book content in the school library in accordance with the familiarity characteristics of elementary school children's books?
2. Is the quality of the book content in the school library in accordance with the language characteristics of elementary school children's books?
3. Is the quality of the book content in the school library in accordance with the characteristics of textual support of elementary school children?
4. Is the quality of the book content in the school library in accordance with the cultural suitability characteristics of elementary school children?

The aim of this study, which involves a content analysis of children's reading books in school libraries, is to evaluate these books. This evaluation is considered important as a reference for library staff, teachers, school management, and school principals when they want to expand their collection of children's reading books. Ensuring that newly acquired books meet the criteria presented in this study will help improve the quality of children's reading materials in school libraries, (making them more beneficial and appropriate for students).

2. METHODS

The school library is like a magical gate that opens the door to a world full of knowledge and imagination for children. Among the neatly lined shelves lies a wealth of children's reading books ready to take them on exciting adventures, inspiring stories, and valuable learning journeys.

However, despite the variety of attractive books, it is important for librarians and teachers to take careful steps in assessing and selecting the right books for children. This is where the content analysis research method plays an important role, acting like a compass that guides them in exploring the contents of the book and ensuring its quality.

Through content analysis, librarians and teachers can dive deeper into various aspects of books, from scientific content and literacy to critical literacy elements. They can assess the accuracy of the information, the engaging writing style, and the positive messages contained in the stories.

A systematic and structured data collection process is key. A representative sample of books from the library collections are analyzed using appropriate instruments, such as rubrics, questionnaires, or observations. The data collected are then processed and analyzed to draw objective and valid conclusions.

The results of content analysis are like a treasure that opens the eyes of librarians and teachers to the quality and suitability of children's reading books. They can identify books with high-quality content that align with the school curriculum and are rich in positive values.

This knowledge can then be used to make informed decisions in managing children's reading book collections. Librarians can prioritize purchasing quality books, remove inappropriate ones, and develop effective literacy programs to increase children's interest in reading.

Content analysis is not just about assessing books; it is also about understanding children's needs and interests. By understanding what they like and need, librarians and teachers can build the right book collections, open the school library gates wider, and send children on unforgettable learning adventures.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research method commonly used to evaluate and understand the content of texts. In the context of children's reading books in school libraries, content analysis can be a valuable tool for assessing the quality and suitability of books to children's needs and interests.

This analysis was chosen as a research method to explore the content of children's reading books commonly found in school libraries. Through this method, researchers can critically examine the contents of books and identify various important aspects in selecting appropriate criteria for children's reading books, such as familiarity, language, illustrations, and cultural relevance. Content analysis is an effective research methodology for studying cultural phenomena [11].

Content analysis begins with carefully reading the text and then building assumptions based on the researchers' thoughts. Researchers conducted interviews with various stakeholders, such as teachers, school principals, deputy principals, and library staff, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the required data. The interview data were then analyzed using a qualitative method known as content analysis [12]. When analyzing content, complex data need to be systematically reviewed and reorganized to facilitate understanding [13]. Content analysis is not only

a tool for descriptive research but can also be used to test hypotheses and draw stronger conclusions [14].

Benefits of Content Analysis:

- Content analysis can provide objective and systematic information about the contents of children's reading books.
- Content analysis can help assess the quality and suitability of books to children's needs and interests.
- Content analysis can help identify bias or stereotypes in children's reading books.
- Content analysis can help increase (expand) the collection of children's reading books in school libraries.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

In the process of collecting data from random children's reading books obtained in school libraries in the Bandung area, the authors collected 120 children's reading books for evaluation. The selected children's reading books were published in various years and were taken from various genres in schools. Bibliographic information such as title, year of publication, and author's name were recorded for each book. Children's reading books available in the school library were immediately collected and analyzed. The author read and reread each book independently to prepare for content analysis. Content analysis is a research method that studies in depth the meaning and messages contained in mass media [15].

Table 1. Content Analysis Rubric for Elementary School Level Children's Reading Books

Indicators for Content	3	2	1	Analysis of Children's Reading Books
<i>Book Familiarity Book Language</i>	The text in the book is close to the world of children, the content presented in the book is in accordance with the background knowledge of elementary school children.	The text in the book is moderately close to the world of children, the content presented in the book is in accordance with the background knowledge of elementary school children.	The text in the book is not close to the world of children, but the content presented in the book is still in accordance with the background knowledge of elementary school children.	
	The vocabulary chosen in the book is appropriate and close to the world of children,	The vocabulary chosen in the book is appropriate and close to the world of children, consisting of	The vocabulary chosen in the book is not appropriate for elementary school children, consisting of words that are	

	consisting of highfrequency words that often appear in the world of children. The text includes 25-300 vocabulary words. Each paragraph is short, with simple sentences and an easy writing genre for children.	high-frequency words that often appear in the world of children. Each paragraph is long and moderately complex.	difficult for children to understand.
<i>Textual Support</i>	The book contains full illustrations on each page, with interesting images in the form of photos and illustrations. The writing size is appropriate to the needs of elementary school children.	The book contains some illustrations on each page with less attractive images.	The book does not contain illustrations on each page.
<i>Cultural Suitability</i>	The reading material is very close to the environment of children, in accordance with the background, values, race, and traditions of the environment of children. The selection of story characters is appropriate to the child's age, and the story's setting is relevant to the current era.	The reading material is moderately close to the environment of children, moderately in accordance with the background, values, race, and traditions of the environment of children. The selection of story characters is moderately appropriate to the child's age, and the story's setting is relevant to the current era.	The reading material is not close to the environment of children, not in accordance with the background, values, race, and traditions of the environment of children. The selection of story characters is not appropriate to the child's age, and the story's setting is not relevant to the current era.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Children's reading book collections in elementary school libraries were analyzed using a modified content analysis rubric from Hadaway & Young (2013) [16]. There are four content analysis indicators used to evaluate (assess) children's reading books in school libraries: book familiarity, book language, textual support, and cultural suitability.

The books analyzed were rated based on this content analysis rubric. The results of the analysis of book collections in elementary school libraries in Bandung are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Results of Analysis of Children's Reading Book Collections in Elementary School Libraries

Content Analysis Indicators	Percentage of indicator value
Book familiarity	73%
Book language	68%
Textual support	73%
Cultural suitability	70%
Total Content Analysis Suitability	71%

Book Familiarity

In this indicator, the score of book familiarity is quite high at 73%. This indicates that many book collections contain reading materials that are familiar and attractive to children. The content in these books is an important part of increasing the familiarity score, namely the information contained in the book is close to the child's background knowledge, which increases their interest in reading. When children encounter reading material that resonates with their existing knowledge, they are more likely to engage with it enthusiastically. The content in these books also needs to be in accordance with existing knowledge in the current curriculum to ensure it

provides relevant explanations.

Almost all of the content presented in the books is familiar to children, so children feel closer to the content of the books. Familiarity gives a positive first impression; if the content meets the child's needs, they will be more enthusiastic and easily digest the book. Teachers play a crucial role in connecting children to the familiar content found in books. They can improve learning experiences by guiding students through the reading materials available in the library. This requires special attention from teachers to the book collection, ensuring students are more familiar with and engaged by the provided content.

Book familiarity is a key factor when children choose (select) books. They often assess whether the type of story presented interests them and meets their needs. This initial assessment is critical in their decision-making process when choosing books in the school library. A good program can help students become more familiar with the various types of books available in the school library.

Book Language

Book language is another important aspect of content analysis. In this indicator, the score of book language is 68%. This indicates that only a portion of book collections in the school library meet the criteria appropriate for elementary school children. The language in these books should use vocabulary familiar to children, making it easier for them to process the information presented. It is important to pay attention to the amount of vocabulary in children's reading books. Good reading material for children typically contains 25 - 300 vocabulary words adjusted to the level of elementary school children and using frequently encountered vocabulary[17].

Book language also pays attention to the structure of the text and genre in reading, a structure that is easily understood by the child's age, presented in a simple and easy to digest form, a text structure that is familiar to children, makes it easier for children to find information from the book. Almost all of the genres found in book collections in the school library are close to children, most of the reading book collections in the school library are traditional story books, fantasy tales, realistic stories, science fiction, and nonfiction [18]. The remaining genres include didactic and other reading materials that might not be as familiar or engaging to children.

Textual Support

Non-text children's reading books should have high textual support score, but the analysis shows that only 73% of books meet this indicator. These reading books usually contain images, either original photos or illustrations. Most books with textual support feature illustrative images that effectively support the illustrations of the reading content presented. However, it is unfortunate that some books lack

explanatory images that could support the reading content.

The font size used in the books is mostly appropriate for elementary school children. Larger text is typically used for books with 25-50 vocabulary words (for lower grades), while smaller text is used for books with 100-300 vocabulary words (for higher grades). The choice of font is generally good, but some lower-grade books use typefaces unsuitable for early writing instruction. For example, the letter "a" is sometimes presented in a way that might confuse young children learning to write.

The titles and subtitles in the reading material are generally clear. Most books in the collection include titles, and some also have subtitles. However, for the table of contents, not all books have this information, especially for books that have charts, maps, tables or graphs, not all books have this textual support in explaining the contents of the text presented.

Cultural Suitability

Cultural suitability in children's reading books is important because young readers cannot yet discern which content is good and in accordance with applicable norms, so authors must ensure cultural suitability (appropriateness) when writing these books. The analysis shows a cultural suitability score of 70%. This indicates that the text is generally culturally neutral, depicting diverse cultures without focusing on any particular group. The content in the reading is also largely in accordance with applicable norms, thus providing good content for readers. The selection of characters and stories are also familiar with the world of children which gives a friendly impression to the reading.

In most books, the ages of the characters described in the books are not much different from those of elementary school children, depicting various types of human characters that exist in the world of children. The story's settings are often close to the environments of children, such as forests, different types of animals and plants, or folk tales familiar to them. However, some translated books, while possessing a good language structure, may still feel distant due to the differing cultural backgrounds from those of Indonesian children.

Discussion

According to the content analysis by Hadaway & Young (2013) [16], the quality of children's reading books in elementary school libraries in Bandung has a score of 71%. This indicates that most of the reading book collections in elementary school libraries in Bandung have good quality in supporting children's reading content. The familiarity of the reading material, which is moderately close to the world of children sparks their interest, encourages them to visit and read books in the school library. Based on the results of interviews and tracing the history of book

procurement, it turns out that books that are not in accordance with the children's reading content are books donated by students, parents, or external parties.

The reading book collections in the school library are an important aspect that schools need to pay attention to when procuring additional new reading materials. Schools need to pay attention to the familiarity of the books so that children can easily be interested in the reading books later. Additionally, the language used in the books is also a supporting factor in selecting which reading books are appropriate for elementary school children, because not all elementary school children can comprehend reading that exceeds 300 vocabulary words; they may feel overwhelmed by longer vocabularies before even attempting to read the book's content.

Textual support is another primary attraction for elementary school children. In fact, many children tend to focus on the illustrations on each page before engaging with the text. Of course, this needs special attention from both teachers and schools to foster more interaction between books and students, so that students are accustomed to processing the content of reading in their school library. When teachers understand the relationship between texts and context in books, the subjects students study, and their own lives, students can better utilize their internal knowledge to analyze what they read in books [7].

Another important factor is cultural suitability, as stories that do not resonate with a child's background may result in them only reading things that suit them. A cultural mismatch can cause a book to fail for its readers, as characters who are similar to them can support their understanding of their own lives and experiences. The absence of texts that reflect the intersectionality of students' identities and lives can have a lasting negative impact [19]. Most of the reading book collections in elementary school libraries are in accordance with the cultural suitability that exists in Indonesia which can help students to find new information with their prior knowledge, so these books can successfully guide students towards the book's purpose of imparting knowledge, indirectly fostering a positive impact on their reading interest, especially among elementary school children.

The quality of children's reading books can be maintained by paying attention to the four indicators discussed. In Bandung, a study on the history of book procurement revealed that about 87% of the book collections in school libraries come from the Bandung City Education Office and grants. This shows the government's commitment to improving literacy levels through adequate facilities. However, in reality, there are still a small number of visitors to school libraries (the number of library visitors remains low). This can be attributed to the lack of a comfortable reading environment and the alignment between learning needs and the book collections in school libraries. Schools and teachers play a vital role in developing programs to utilize book collections in school libraries, even though almost all existing books already fulfill the children's reading content. Teachers are required to have the ability to create learning strategies so that learning becomes meaningful, especially in learning to read using reading sources in the school library [20]. Schools can also design literacy activities such as silent reading, writing story books, cooperative literacy programs, reading news, and book reviews [21]. Children's

reading book content that is appropriate to children's needs cannot simply increase students' interest in reading and literacy skills, special treatment needs to be carried out to improve this.

4. CONCLUSION

The reading book collections in elementary school libraries in Bandung is largely in accordance with the expected content for children's reading books. Reading books that are familiar to children and supported by appropriate language structure, genre, text, and writing size suited to the characteristics of elementary school children, can make it easier for children to process new information contained. Textual support is an important part of the suitability of reading, especially for elementary school children. This is the main attraction for them because they still need explanations using concrete visuals from written information that they find—to be able to develop information from their background knowledge. Unfortunately, not many books display information using charts, tables or graphs which reduces the variety of reading for children to be able to develop their critical thinking skills. Cultural suitability found in almost all reading is also close to the environment and background of the children; this includes a variety of races, folklore from various regions with various existing regional values. Although translated books mostly do not suit the children's background, this does not necessarily prevent them from learning more about the content of the information presented, because the choice of common language and interesting textual support make the book feel familiar to them (children).

Despite the high quality of the reading book collections, the school libraries face a significant challenge: low visitor numbers and a lack of student engagement with the books. Thus, special measures need to be taken to make students accustomed to reading books, involving both teachers and supporting school programs. This could be a follow-up to this study, namely to explore the reasons why, despite having appropriate children's reading book content, the library is devoid of visitors and the level of interest in reading children's books is still low.

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