

**THE IMPACT OF CHILD-FRIENDLY LIBRARIES ON  
EDUCATIONAL BEHAVIOR OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN TEGAL REGENCY**

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*Received 25 December 2025, Accepted 27 April 2026, Published 30 April 2026*

**Abstract**

The low reading interest among elementary school students in Indonesia is a critical issue, often exacerbated by school library conditions that are rigid, non-ergonomic, and visually unappealing. This study aims to deeply analyze the impact of child-friendly library interior design innovations on the formation of educational behavior among students in Tegal Regency. This research serves as a response to the "unattractive" library phenomenon by proposing a holistic design intervention. Using a qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design, the research was conducted in three elementary schools participating in the National Child-Friendly Library program: SD Negeri Rangimulya, SD Negeri Dampyak 02, and SD Negeri Procot 03. Data were collected via triangulation techniques, including participatory observation, structured interviews with principals, teachers, and students, and extensive documentation. The data were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results indicate that interior design transformations focusing on three core elements physical (vibrant colors, zoning, ergonomic furniture), environmental (lighting, ventilation), and inclusivity successfully created a more stimulating, safe, and comfortable library atmosphere. This spatial transformation significantly impacted students' educational behaviors in multidimensional ways. First, there was a surge in Independent Visit Initiatives, indicating a shift from passive to active literacy interest. Second, Persistence and Focus improved, evidenced by longer durations of reading time ("time on task") facilitated

by comfortable seating options like bean bags and carpets. Third, Positive Social Interaction flourished, where the library became a hub for collaborative learning and discussion, fostering mutual respect. Fourth, Curiosity and Exploration were heightened through accessible low-shelving and thematic visual displays. It is concluded that library interior design serves not merely as an aesthetic improvement, but as a vital pedagogical instrument. The child-friendly design effectively bridges the gap between students and literacy, transforming the library from a mere storage room into a vibrant center for character building and educational development.

**Keywords:** Interior Design, Child-Friendly Library, Educational Behavior, Reading Interest, Elementary School, Literacy Environment

### Abstrak

Rendahnya minat baca di kalangan siswa sekolah dasar di Indonesia merupakan isu kritis, yang sering diperparah oleh kondisi perpustakaan sekolah yang kaku, tidak ergonomis, dan kurang menarik secara visual. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam dampak inovasi desain interior perpustakaan ramah anak terhadap pembentukan perilaku pendidikan di kalangan siswa di Kabupaten Tegal. Penelitian ini berfungsi sebagai respons terhadap fenomena perpustakaan yang "kurang menarik" dengan mengusulkan intervensi desain holistik. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus instrumental, penelitian ini dilakukan di tiga sekolah dasar yang berpartisipasi dalam program Perpustakaan Ramah Anak Nasional: SD Negeri Rangimulya, SD Negeri Dampyak 02, dan SD Negeri Procot 03. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik triangulasi, termasuk observasi partisipatif, wawancara terstruktur dengan kepala sekolah, guru, dan siswa, serta dokumentasi yang ekstensif. Data kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi desain interior yang berfokus pada tiga elemen inti—fisik (warna cerah, zonasi, furnitur ergonomis), lingkungan (pencahayaan, ventilasi), dan inklusivitas—berhasil menciptakan suasana perpustakaan yang lebih merangsang, aman, dan nyaman. Transformasi spasial ini secara signifikan memengaruhi perilaku pendidikan siswa dalam berbagai dimensi. Pertama, terjadi peningkatan Inisiatif Kunjungan Mandiri, yang menunjukkan pergeseran dari minat literasi pasif ke aktif. Kedua, Ketekunan dan Fokus meningkat, dibuktikan dengan durasi waktu membaca yang lebih lama ("waktu mengerjakan tugas") yang difasilitasi oleh pilihan tempat duduk yang nyaman seperti bean bag dan karpet. Ketiga, Interaksi Sosial Positif berkembang, di mana perpustakaan menjadi pusat pembelajaran dan diskusi kolaboratif, yang menumbuhkan rasa saling menghormati. Keempat, Rasa Ingin Tahu dan Eksplorasi meningkat melalui rak rendah yang mudah diakses dan tampilan visual tematik. Disimpulkan bahwa desain interior perpustakaan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai peningkatan estetika, tetapi juga sebagai instrumen pedagogis yang vital. Desain ramah anak secara efektif menjembatani kesenjangan antara siswa dan literasi, mengubah perpustakaan dari sekadar ruang penyimpanan menjadi pusat yang dinamis untuk pembentukan karakter dan pengembangan pendidikan.

**Kata kunci:** Desain Interior, Perpustakaan Ramah Anak, Perilaku Pendidikan, Minat Membaca, Sekolah Dasar, Lingkungan Literasi

## INTRODUCTION

The history of library development in Indonesia traces back to the colonial era, marked by the establishment of the National Library in 1888 in Batavia. Initially serving as a repository for literature and scientific works, the function of libraries has evolved significantly post-independence. Today, libraries are no longer mere storehouses for books; they have transformed into centres for literacy, education, and community development. The National Library of Indonesia (2020) emphasizes that modern libraries play a vital role in increasing public reading interest and acting as hubs for lifelong learning. However, despite this evolving definition, the reality in many Indonesian elementary schools presents a stark contrast.

The urgency of this research is underpinned by the concerning state of literacy among Indonesian children. Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 places Indonesia sixth in Southeast Asia for reading ability, with a score of 359, significantly below the OECD average. Furthermore, the 2023 Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM) and the Reading Literacy Activity Index (Alibaca) reveal low scores in access and cultural dimensions. These statistics indicate that a vast majority of Indonesian students have not reached minimum competency in reading literacy. One of the contributing factors to this crisis is the lack of access to quality reading materials and, crucially, the unappealing condition of school libraries.

Ideally, a library is an educational facility that supports teaching and learning activities. According to Law Number 43 of 2007 concerning Libraries and the National Standard for School/Madrasah Libraries (2024), a library is an institution that manages collections professionally to meet educational, research, and recreational needs. However, preliminary observations conducted by the researcher in Tegal Regency revealed significant gaps between these ideals and the physical reality. In SD Negeri Rangimulya, the library room was dominated by dull colours and standard, non-ergonomic furniture that did not fit the students' body proportions. High shelves made books inaccessible, reducing visual appeal. Similarly, in SD Negeri Dampyak 02, the spatial arrangement was rigid, lacking zoning separation between reading and play areas, causing students to be passive. In SD Negeri Procot 03, accessibility was a major issue due to high shelving and suboptimal lighting. These physical conditions created psychological barriers, preventing students from viewing reading as an enjoyable habit.

The concept of a "Child-Friendly Library" emerges as a necessary solution. A child-friendly library is designed specifically to meet the needs and interests of children, creating an environment that is safe, comfortable, and attractive. This concept aligns with the principles of Child-Friendly Libraries advocated by IFLA (2015), which prioritize the emotional well-being of children through participatory and enjoyable learning spaces. Such libraries are characterized by vibrant colours, ergonomic furniture suitable for children (anthropometry), clear zoning for different activities (reading, storytelling, creativity), and accessible collections.

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon several key concepts. First is the theory of Interior Design in an educational context. Interior design is not just about aesthetics; it is the art and science of planning space to meet functional and psychological needs. Ariska & Noor (2024) state that ideal interior design includes planning for colour, form, lighting, texture, and circulation. In the context of libraries, design must integrate social, cultural, and psychological values to become a "centre of social interaction." For elementary school students, who are in the concrete operational stage of development (Piaget), the physical environment has a profound impact on their thinking and behaviour. They require stimulating visuals, tactile experiences, and spaces that allow for movement and exploration.

Second, the study relies on the concept of "Educational Behaviour." Educational behaviour in elementary students is a representation of how they interpret, respond to, and engage in the learning process. It encompasses more than just cognitive achievement; it includes attitudes, habits, and social skills. Key aspects of educational behaviour identified in this study include: (1) Reading Interest and Motivation, which serves as the foundation for literacy; (2) Persistence and Focus, related to the child's ability to maintain attention; (3) Curiosity and Exploratory Behaviour, driven by a stimulating environment; (4) Social-Emotional Skills, such as collaboration and empathy fostered through shared spaces; and (5) Future Orientation.

Literature reviews of relevant research support the premise that design influences behaviour. Murdowo et al. (2020) found that child-friendly design elements like contrasting colours and geometric furniture in a mosque library effectively fostered reading interest. Similarly, Putri and Dewanti (2021) highlighted the importance of ergonomics and thematic spacing in the National Library's children's service. Afian (2023) emphasized that innovative services and child-friendly approaches in school libraries directly correlate with increased reading interest. However, most previous studies have focused either on public libraries or general management aspects. There is a specific need to analyze the direct impact of interior design innovations within the formal elementary school setting in Tegal Regency, specifically linking it to a broader range of educational behaviors beyond just "interest."

The specific context of Tegal Regency adds relevance to this study. In 2024, 115 elementary schools in Tegal received assistance from the National Child-Friendly Library Program by ProVisi. This massive intervention provides a fertile ground to evaluate the effectiveness of design innovations. The researcher, serving as a school supervisor, observed that while the program exists, the transformation in many schools is uneven, and the link to behavioural change needs empirical documentation.

Therefore, the problem formulation focuses on three main areas: (1) How is the current interior design of elementary school libraries in Tegal Regency? (2) What are the innovations in child-friendly library interior design? and (3) How do these innovations impact the formation of educational behaviour in elementary students? The objective of this research is to describe the existing design conditions, detail the specific innovations implemented (physical, environmental, and inclusive elements), and deeply analyse the impact of these designs on students' educational behaviours. Theoretically, this research contributes to library science and literacy theory by highlighting the role of the physical environment (Environmental Psychology) in

education. Practically, it provides a guideline for school principals, librarians, and policymakers to design effective learning spaces that foster a generation of lifelong learners. By transforming the library from a static repository into a dynamic, child-centered environment, schools can effectively address the literacy crisis and cultivate positive educational behaviours essential for the students' future.

## **METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design. This approach was selected because the study aims to explore a social phenomenon deeply within its natural context specifically, how the implementation of child-friendly library interior design influences the complex formation of educational behaviour in elementary school students. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, qualitative inquiry is essential when the researcher seeks to understand the subjective meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences, especially when the variables cannot be easily separated from their context. A case study design allows for an intensive, holistic description and analysis of the "bounded system" (Yin, 2018), which in this case is the specific environment of the selected elementary schools.

**Research Location and Subjects** The research was conducted at three elementary schools in Tegal Regency, Central Java, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year (August to October 2025). The locations were selected using a purposive sampling technique to represent different geographical characteristics of the regency:

1. SD Negeri Rangimulya (Warureja District): Representing the coastal/northern region.
2. SD Negeri Dampyak 02 (Kramat District): Representing the central/urban region.
3. SD Negeri Procot 03 (Slawi District): Representing the southern/highland region.

These schools were chosen because they are recipients of the National Child-Friendly Library Assistance Program and have actively implemented design innovations. The research subjects (informants) included school principals, library managers (librarians/teachers), classroom teachers, and students (grades 3-6). The students were the primary unit of analysis as they are the direct beneficiaries of the design changes.

**Data Collection Techniques** To ensure data richness and validity, the researcher utilized triangulation of data collection techniques:

1. Participant Observation

The researcher was directly involved in observing student behaviour in the library. Observations focused on how students interacted with design elements (e.g., sitting on carpets, reaching for books on low shelves, reacting to wall colours), the frequency and duration of visits, and social interactions during literacy activities.

2. Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted with key informants using a prepared guide. Questions explored perceptions of the library's atmosphere, comfort levels, changes in reading motivation, and the specific impact of design elements like

furniture and lighting.

### 3. Documentation

The researcher collected physical and digital evidence, including "before and after" photos of the library interior, student visit logs, library activity schedules, and school reports related to literacy programs. This provided historical and administrative context to the observational data.

Data Analysis Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of three concurrent flows of activity:

Data Reduction: Selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes and transcripts. The researcher focused on data relevant to interior design innovations and indicators of educational behaviour (interest, focus, curiosity, social skills).

1. Data Display: Organizing the reduced data into narrative descriptions and matrices to facilitate understanding of patterns. This included comparing conditions across the three schools.
2. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Drawing preliminary conclusions based on regularities and patterns (themes) found in the data, and verifying these conclusions through triangulation and member checks (confirming findings with informants) to ensure credibility.

Data Validity To guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied Credibility criteria through triangulation of sources (comparing student, teacher, and principal perspectives) and triangulation of techniques (comparing observation, interview, and documentation data). Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context. Dependability and Confirmability were ensured by maintaining an audit trail of the research process and data analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Transformation of Library Interiors: From Rigid to Child-Friendly. The results from the three case study locations (SD Negeri Rangimulya, Dampyak 02, and Procot 03) reveal a significant transformation in the physical and psychological environment of the school libraries. Prior to the intervention, the libraries were characterized as "rigid," "dull," and "unwelcoming," serving primarily as storage rooms for books. The implementation of the Child-Friendly Library concept introduced comprehensive innovations across three main elements: Physical, Environmental, and Inclusive.

1. Physical Elements (Colour, Furniture, Zoning): The most visible innovation was the application of colour psychology. Schools shifted from monochromatic white or beige walls to vibrant palettes of yellow, light green, and blue. For instance, at SD Negeri Dampyak 02, the walls were painted bright yellow with murals of nature (bees, butterflies), creating a stimulating visual atmosphere. Furniture was completely overhauled to meet ergonomic standards (anthropometry) for elementary students. High, imposing shelves were replaced with low, open-access shelving (60-90 cm high), allowing even lower-grade students to reach books independently. Rigid wooden chairs were supplemented or replaced with flexible seating options like colourful carpets,

bean bags, and low tables. Zoning was introduced to break the monotony of the space. Libraries were divided into distinct functional areas: a "Reading Zone" for quiet study, a "Storytelling Zone" with carpets for group activities, and an "Exploration Zone" where books were displayed face-out to attract attention.

2. Environmental Elements (Lighting and Atmosphere): Innovations in lighting involved maximizing natural light through large windows and using neutral white LED lighting to prevent eye strain. Ventilation was improved to eliminate musty odours, a common deterrent in old libraries. The inclusion of indoor plants in some schools added a biophilic element, making the space feel fresher and more relaxing.
3. Inclusive and Technological Elements: The design prioritized accessibility. The removal of physical barriers and the arrangement of furniture allowed for smooth circulation. Some libraries integrated simple digital corners with tablets or computers for digital literacy, though printed books remained the focus. Thematic decorations, such as "The World of Books" or "Literacy Forest," provided a cohesive narrative that engaged students' imaginations.

**Impact on Educational Behaviour**The transformation of the interior design had a profound and measurable impact on the students' educational behaviour. The findings confirm the theoretical framework that the environment acts as a "third teacher," shaping how students learn and behave.

1. Increased Reading Interest and Independent Visits The most immediate impact was a surge in student visits. The aesthetic appeal of the "new" libraries acted as a magnet. Students reported feeling "happy" and "comfortable" due to the bright colours and attractive murals. The shift to low shelving and face-out displays empowered students to choose books independently, fostering a sense of autonomy. This aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020), where autonomy is a key driver of intrinsic motivation. Students no longer waited for teacher instructions to visit the library; they utilized break times to visit voluntarily, indicating a shift from passive to active literacy interest.
2. Enhanced Persistence and Focus (Time on Task) Teachers observed that students spent longer durations in the library ("time on task"). The provision of comfortable, non-rigid seating options (carpets, bean bags) addressed the physical need for movement and comfort in elementary children. Unlike rigid chairs that cause fatigue, the flexible seating allowed students to find their preferred reading posture, thereby extending their concentration span. This supports the findings of Armanila et al. (2024), who noted that ergonomic comfort directly correlates with focus duration. The "Quiet Zones" provided a sanctuary from noise, further aiding concentration for deep reading.
3. Stimulation of Curiosity and Exploratory Behaviour The innovative layouts stimulated curiosity. Thematic zones and attractive displays (e.g., "New Arrivals" or "Book of the Week" on special racks) encouraged students to explore genres they might not have touched otherwise. The visual richness of the environment mural maps, inspirational quotes, and educational posters triggered questions and discussions, turning the library into a space of active inquiry rather than passive reception.

4. **Development of Positive Social Skills** The redesign fostered a new social dynamic. The open layouts and group seating areas (like round tables or carpeted corners) facilitated collaborative learning. Students were observed discussing books, reading aloud to peers, and helping each other find materials. This interaction helped build empathy and communication skills. Furthermore, the environment cultivated a sense of responsibility and mutual respect; students began to self-regulate noise levels in quiet zones and took ownership of the space by tidying up books, influenced by the "clean and beautiful" atmosphere they wished to maintain.
5. **Reduction of Anxiety and Boredom** The psychological impact of the design cannot be overstated. The shift from a "scary" or "serious" library to a colourful, playful one reduced anxiety associated with learning. The library became a safe haven or a "healing space" for students, contributing to their overall emotional well-being. This positive emotional association with the library is crucial for sustaining long-term literacy habits.

In summary, the innovation in interior design proved to be a pedagogical catalyst. It transformed the library from a static facility into a dynamic educational instrument that actively shapes positive learning behaviours independence, focus, curiosity, and collaboration essential for the holistic development of elementary students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from SD Negeri Rangimulya, SD Negeri Dampyak 02, and SD Negeri Procot 03, it is concluded that the transformation of library interior design using the child-friendly concept has a significant and positive impact on the educational behaviour of elementary school students in Tegal Regency. The innovations, characterized by vibrant colour palettes, ergonomic and accessible furniture, and clear functional zoning, successfully altered the atmosphere of the libraries from rigid and uninviting to stimulating and inclusive.

This physical transformation drove a shift in student behaviour from passive to active. The impact is evidenced by increased initiatives for independent visits (heightened reading interest), longer durations of focus during reading activities (persistence), and the emergence of positive social interactions and collaboration among students. The design acted not merely as an aesthetic enhancement but as a vital pedagogical instrument that facilitated accessibility, comfort, and psychological well-being.

Implications and recommendations, the study implies that schools and policymakers must view library infrastructure not just as a facility issue but as a strategic educational investment. The physical environment is a determinant of literacy success. (a) For Schools: It is recommended to maintain the sustainability of these innovations by regularly refreshing visual themes and involving students in the design process to foster a sense of ownership; (b) For Teachers: Educators should integrate the library space into daily learning, utilizing the flexible zones for diverse pedagogical activities beyond just reading; (c) For Further Research: Future studies should explore the quantitative correlation between library design quality and academic achievement scores, or examine the impact of digital integration in hybrid

library designs for elementary schools.

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