

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON STUDENT'S READING PREFERENCES

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including the way students access and consume reading materials. This article explores the comparison between reading physical books and reading on digital devices, and its impact on students' reading preferences in the digital era for students. Through literature analysis and quantitative research, this article highlights the advantages and disadvantages of both reading methods. Physical books offer a more focused and immersive experience, while digital reading provides quick access and ease of use. However, there are concerns about decreasing the duration and quality of comprehension when reading from the screen, especially amidst the rise of multitasking. This article also discusses the impact of these changes on education, including the challenges for teachers to balance the use of physical books and digital devices in the learning process. In the future, it will be important to find a balance between these two forms of reading so that students can gain optimal benefits from technological advances without sacrificing the quality of their literacy.

Keywords: *Reading preferences; Digital era; Students*

Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah membawa perubahan signifikan dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan, termasuk cara siswa mengakses dan mengonsumsi materi bacaan. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi perbandingan antara membaca buku fisik dan membaca di perangkat digital, serta dampaknya terhadap preferensi

membaca siswa di era digital. Melalui analisis literatur dan penelitian kuantitatif, artikel ini menyoroti kelebihan dan kekurangan dari kedua metode membaca tersebut. Buku fisik menawarkan pengalaman yang lebih fokus dan mendalam, sementara membaca secara digital memberikan akses cepat dan kemudahan penggunaan. Namun, ada kekhawatiran tentang penurunan durasi dan kualitas pemahaman saat membaca dari layar, terutama di tengah meningkatnya multitasking. Artikel ini juga membahas dampak perubahan tersebut pada pendidikan, termasuk tantangan bagi guru untuk menyeimbangkan penggunaan buku fisik dan perangkat digital dalam proses pembelajaran. Di masa depan, penting untuk menemukan keseimbangan antara kedua bentuk membaca ini agar siswa dapat memperoleh manfaat optimal dari kemajuan teknologi tanpa mengorbankan kualitas literasi mereka.

Kata kunci: Preferensi membaca; Era digital; Siswa

INTRODUCTION

Background

In today's digital era, access to information and entertainment has undergone significant transformation. With advancements in technology, printed books and digital media are competing for readers' attention especially students. This phenomenon has created a shift in how individuals read and interact with texts. While printed books still hold a special place in many people's hearts, the use of digital devices such as tablets, smartphones, and e-readers is becoming increasingly widespread, influencing readers' preferences. Studies show that interaction with digital media not only changes how people consume content but also affects how they understand and retain information. For many readers, the convenience and accessibility offered by digital media make it the primary choice. However, a pressing question arises: how does this transition impact the reading experience, memory, and comprehension of texts?

This article aims to explore the comparison between reading physical books and reading on digital devices, as well as the impact of digital media on reading preferences. By understanding these factors, we can better anticipate and navigate the future of literacy in an increasingly digitally connected context.

Definiton and Context

Literacy is a life skill that enables individuals to function optimally in society. This life skill is rooted in how literacy is applied through critical thinking activities. The culture of literacy is linked to the future of a nation, so it needs serious attention. The quality of a nation is determined by its intelligence and knowledge, while intelligence and knowledge are produced by the amount of information acquired, which comes from both oral and written sources. Reading interest is not an innate quality but arises from a

learning process, habituation, experience, and support from the surrounding environment. Habits are activities that are performed repeatedly, not just once or twice, but become structured activities accompanied by clear targets.

As Najwa Shihab said, reading interest is a skill that must be trained just like running a marathon. The more we run, the stronger we become, and our endurance improves. In this digital era, students can access reading materials anywhere and anytime. With the ease of accessing these readings, we can observe whether students prefer reading physical books or digital devices.

Physical books have been the primary means of documenting lesson materials since the advent of schools. They are structured, neatly bound at the spine, and the text volumes are arranged chronologically, allowing students from generation to generation to enhance their knowledge and develop critical thinking skills. Physical books offer a unique and irreplaceable reading experience. Many students readers feel that holding a physical book, feeling the paper, and smelling the book's aroma are parts of the reading experience that cannot be replaced by a digital screen. The ritual of reading a physical book from choosing a book, flipping through the pages, to marking important sections provides a distinct satisfaction. Physical books also do not require electronic devices or batteries, making them a more practical choice in various situations, such as when traveling or in the absence of electricity. Additionally, many student prefer to collect physical books, and these collections often become a part of their personal identity and pride.

The advent of digital technology has captured text and produced it electronically as what we now know as eBooks. An eBook is simply a book, but its medium of interaction is a computer. Like physical books, eBooks also have titles, indexes, pages, and content, all presented electronically. However, unlike physical books, an eBook can be accessed virtually anywhere by anyone with access. E-books offer many advantages that physical books cannot provide. One of the main benefits is ease of access. Readers can quickly download eBooks from various platforms, such as Amazon Kindle, Google Play Books, or digital library apps. This allows them to gain instant access to thousands of titles without needing to visit a bookstore. E-books are also more environmentally friendly. By reducing the need for paper, the use of eBooks can minimize the environmental impact caused by the production of physical books. Furthermore, eBooks are often cheaper than printed books, making them more affordable for many readers.

Interactive features also add value to eBooks. Many eBooks come equipped with tools such as text search, notes, and highlights that allow student readers to engage more deeply with the material. This is especially useful in academic contexts, where readers often need to refer back to specific sections.

Research Methods

This research was conducted using primary data with a simple linear regression model. The data was obtained by the researcher through a survey method, where the researcher distributed questionnaires to respondents both directly and via an online questionnaire (Google Forms). The data used in this study is quantitative, meaning it consists of numerical data that can be calculated. According to Sugiyono (2017: 8), the definition of the quantitative research method is a research method based on positivism philosophy, used to study specific populations or samples, with data collection using research instruments, quantitative/statistical data analysis, and aimed at testing predetermined hypotheses. This study produced a red-colored diagram representing students' interest in reading digital books, and a blue-colored diagram representing students' interest in reading physical books.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evolution of Reading Amongst Students

The change in reading styles among students today is undeniable. Awareness of advancements in science and technology is an effort to understand the current state of affairs. People need to continuously update their lifestyles and thinking patterns in response to both evolutionary and revolutionary changes in all areas. This is similar to the curriculum in education, which is frequently revised. In Indonesia, the curriculum adapts to changes in knowledge and technology. The role of education today is not only to strengthen traditional literacy skills but also to actively promote new literacy that integrates with the enhancement of scientific and professional competencies. Therefore, there is a need for a new reorientation in educational administration, whether in primary, secondary, or higher education.

It is clear that we are now in a phase of dependence on gadgets and the ease of information access they provide. However, for students, this can negatively impact their interest in reading. In today's era, students find it harder to engage with reading content compared to visual content. The rapid growth of visual content, such as that found on YouTube and Instagram, compounds this issue. If students are only accustomed to absorbing information from visual media, they will struggle when faced with written texts. Another issue arises when students become lazy to read because they are overly pampered by the abundance of summarized learning materials available online. Their actions are not driven by a strong interest in reading but rather by the need to fulfill assignments given by teachers. This becomes a significant issue affecting students' reading habits, which directly impacts their interest in reading.

The evolution from physical books to digital books has undergone several important stages. Before digital technology, physical books were the only way to read. They were made from paper and printed, encompassing various genres and formats. Reading physical books is often associated with sensory experiences,

such as the smell of paper and the sound of pages turning. With technological advancements, e-books began to emerge in the late 20th century. Digital books allow readers to access text through electronic devices like computers and e-readers. E-books offer conveniences such as the ability to store thousands of books on one device and quick search features. The popularity of smartphones has also led to the availability of many reading apps, such as Kindle and Google Play Books, making access to digital books even easier, allowing readers to read anytime and anywhere. Modern digital books often include interactive elements, such as videos, audio, and customizable images. This enhances the reading experience and provides new ways to understand and enjoy content.

This evolution also affects reading habits. Many people now prefer reading on screens rather than on paper, although some remain loyal to physical books due to their sentimental value and unique reading experience. This evolution illustrates how technology can change the way we interact with information and knowledge, as well as expand opportunities for learning and enjoying literature.

Comparison and Balance Between Reading A Physical Book and Reading on A Screen

It's undeniable that technology is becoming more advanced and developing rapidly every day. This leads to changes in various aspects of life, including education. As a result, colleges and schools are shifting from traditional learning methods to more modern systems. A clear example of this is the rise of electronic books, which are gradually replacing printed books. Instead of using paper, we now have e-books and digital documents that can be easily shared as files like Docx, Doc, or PDF via email or other applications.

The fast-paced technological advancements not only change formal education but also impact personal characteristics. To use e-books, one must be able to operate a smartphone and connect to the internet.

Books or documents can generally be seen as media for communicating information, which includes facts, educational material, and both non-fiction and fiction (Landoni, 2013). Digital books are electronic versions of traditional books. While printed books consist of physical pages, digital books contain information that can be text or images. Digital books are popular because they are smaller and often come with search features, allowing readers to quickly find specific words.

Various popular formats for digital books include RTF, PDF, JPEG, LIT, and HTML. Each format has its own advantages and disadvantages, depending on the device used for reading. Digital books also help preserve literature that requires costly maintenance. The best way to preserve books is to convert them into e-books.

Reading physical books and digital books has its own pros and cons. Here's a comparison based on several aspects:

1. Reading Experience: Physical books offer a unique sensory experience. Readers can feel the texture of the paper, smell the book, and enjoy flipping the pages. Many find satisfaction in owning and collecting physical books. In contrast, digital books are more practical and modern but lack the physical experience, which some readers miss.

2. Portability: Physical books require space for storage and can be heavy to carry around. Digital books, however, are very portable; thousands can be stored on a single device like an e-reader, tablet, or smartphone, allowing readers to take their library anywhere.

3. Accessibility and Cost: Physical books require access to bookstores or libraries, which can be hard to find in remote areas and are usually more expensive due to printing and shipping costs. Digital books can be downloaded instantly from anywhere with internet access, often at lower prices or even for free.

4. Additional Features: Physical books don't have features like automatic text search or digital highlighting, although readers can make notes. Digital books offer modern features like highlighting, searching for specific words, adding notes, adjusting text size, and even reading text aloud.

5. Eye Strain: Physical books don't cause digital eye strain, but they can be tiring to read in poor lighting. Reading digital books on screens for long periods can lead to eye fatigue due to blue light exposure, though some e-readers use e-ink technology that is easier on the eyes.



Figure 1: The Impact of Digital Media on Eye Strain

This diagram shows the relationship between the use of digital media and eye strain. It can be illustrated that the longer students use digital devices, the higher the level of eye strain they experience.

6. Environment: Producing physical books uses paper, which can impact the environment, although many use recycled paper. Digital books are more environmentally friendly in terms of physical resources, but electronic devices also require energy and resources to produce and use.

Overall, the choice between physical and digital books depends on personal preferences, lifestyle, and reading needs. Both have their advantages and disadvantages suited to different situations.

In a quantitative study using a questionnaire, a red diagram showed students' interest in digital books, while a blue diagram indicated interest in physical books in 2024. It revealed that 80% of students in Indonesia prefer reading digital books.

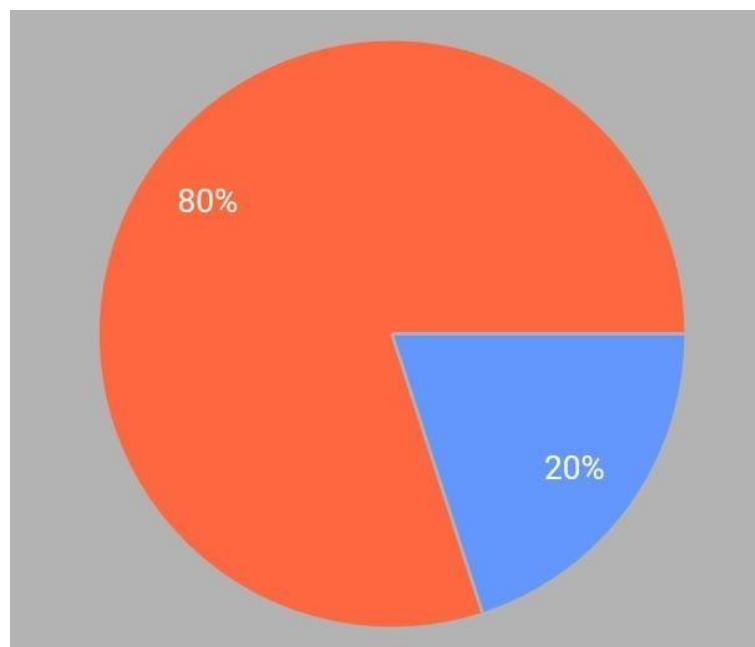


Figure 2: Reading References of Students in the Digital Era

The shift in students' reading tools will certainly impact learning and teaching practices in schools.

Impact of Education and Learning

The digital era has had a huge impact on education, both positive and negative. Here are some effects of the digital age on education, including its influence on learning quality, teaching methods, and student interest in reading:

A. Broader Access to Education

One of the biggest impacts of the digital era in education is wider access to learning materials. Students and teachers can now access information from various sources worldwide, including e-books, research articles, educational videos, and online courses. This allows students to gain diverse knowledge, even in remote areas.

Digital learning apps and e-learning platforms have also helped reach more people. Students with limited access to traditional education can now learn online, giving them flexibility in when and where they study.

B. More Interactive and Innovative Teaching Methods

The digital era has encouraged the use of technology in teaching methods. Tools like projectors, videos, interactive simulations, e-books, and educational apps have changed how teachers instruct in the classroom. Students are no longer just passive listeners; they actively participate through interactive digital activities.

Technology also enables more adaptive and personalized learning methods, allowing students to learn at their own pace and focus on areas where they need more attention. This enhances learning effectiveness and helps students who learn differently from traditional methods.

C. Digital Literacy as an Essential Skill

In modern education, digital literacy has become a vital skill. Students must learn not only to read and write in the traditional sense but also to understand how to access, evaluate, and use digital information effectively and ethically. Digital literacy includes the ability to search for information online, assess the credibility of sources, use software and digital tools, and communicate online.

However, digital literacy also presents challenges. Not all students have the same skills in using technology, and there's a need to educate them on how to use it wisely, especially in distinguishing between true and false information.

D. Distraction and Decreased Concentration

One negative impact of the digital era is the increase in distractions among students. The presence of technology and easy access to social media, games, and other digital entertainment can reduce students' ability to focus on learning. Notifications from their devices can easily distract them during study time, disrupting their concentration.

This distraction also leads to a decrease in reading interest, particularly for in-depth materials that require sustained focus. Students tend to prefer shorter, easier-to-digest content, which can affect their critical thinking skills and deep understanding.



Figure 3: Distractions for Students While Reading in Digital Media

This diagram shows the level of distraction students face while reading with digital media. Research results indicate that more than 50% of students experience distractions, with factors such as social media notifications, ads, or links diverting their attention from the main reading.

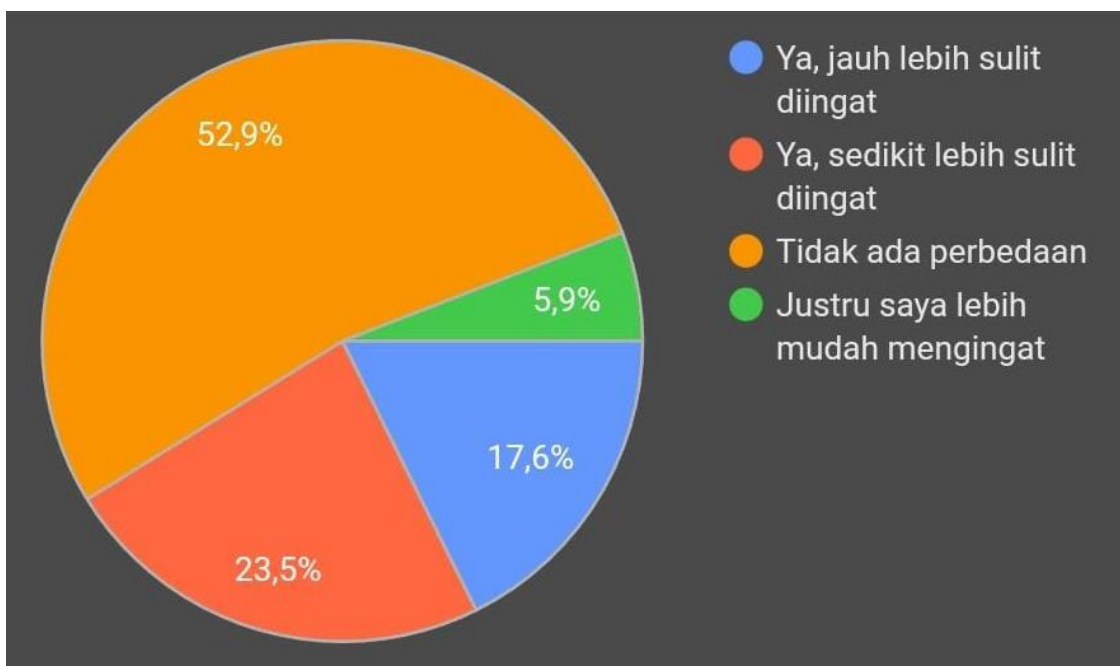


Figure 4: The Impact of Digital Media on Memory

This diagram illustrates how digital media affects students' memory. The results show that 52.9% of students feel there is no significant difference in their memory when reading from digital media compared to print media. This indicates that most students believe both have a similar impact on their memory.

Overall, the digital era has brought significant changes to education, providing wider access, flexibility, and innovation in teaching methods. However, it also poses challenges, especially in maintaining student concentration, avoiding distractions, and ensuring equal access to technology. Education in the digital age must balance the benefits of technology while preserving the quality of learning, improving digital literacy, and ensuring students can think critically and independently. Education should continue to adapt to technological advancements while upholding fundamental educational values, such as deep reading skills, analytical thinking, and healthy social interaction between students and teachers.

Solutions for Educators

Digital books, also known as e-books, are an important part of the technological advancements we've seen in education. As technology has developed, traditional textbooks are often seen as less practical. Their large size makes them hard to carry around and read anytime. Therefore, there is a need for more efficient supplementary materials. Teachers can take advantage of technology by transforming printed books into digital books, which serve as innovative learning tools.

In the classroom, digital books can be used as both study materials and teaching aids. They contain all the necessary content for students, making the learning process easier. Additionally, digital books can effectively deliver messages that teachers explain during lessons. As Asyar (2012, p.8) points out, learning media is anything that can convey planned messages or information from a specific source, creating a conducive learning environment and promoting efficient and effective learning activities.

Educators face new challenges in the digital era, from changing teaching methods to technological distractions affecting students. To tackle these challenges and remain relevant in providing quality education, teachers can implement several solutions. They can adopt blended learning methods; even though technology offers many resources, teachers should still encourage students to read physical books and develop deep reading skills. Occasionally, students can be assigned tasks that require self-reflection or manual evaluation, like writing essays or taking tests without technological help.

Teachers should engage students in discussions about the benefits and drawbacks of technology in daily life, including its impact on education. Educators also need to evaluate their own use of technology, filter information, and teach these skills to students. They can show students how to search for and evaluate relevant and

accurate information online, which is crucial for helping them avoid fake or unreliable information.

Therefore, educators in the digital age need to adapt and use technology effectively while not forgetting traditional educational values. Balancing technology with conventional approaches is key to creating more effective and inclusive learning experiences. By continuously developing their own skills and helping students manage technology wisely, educators can create a supportive learning environment that fosters both intellectual and emotional growth.

CONCLUSION

The change in how students read in Indonesia is greatly influenced by technological advancements. While digital reading makes access easier, there are challenges such as a decreased interest in printed books and increased distractions. The shift from physical books to digital formats requires us to rethink teaching methods, emphasizing the importance of balancing traditional reading skills with digital literacy. Teachers need to adapt to this situation by using creative teaching methods, encouraging critical thinking, and getting students to engage in deeper reading. By combining the use of digital tools with traditional reading values, educators can create a better learning environment and help students face the challenges of the digital age.

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