



Exploring the DEAR Time Program on Students' Reading Habit: A Descriptive Study at a Junior High School

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Abstract

Establishing a reading habit in the current time is challenging due to the distraction of the fast-paced and digitally interconnected world. Despite the challenges, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) has the potential to foster a love for reading and increase literacy among students. However, it is necessary to investigate its impact comprehensively to get more incredible data. This study aims to explore the DEAR time program on students' reading habits and attitudes toward in-depth interviews. The method of this study is a qualitative approach by descriptive and thematic analysis — involving open-ended and close-ended questions to obtain valuable data due to the experiences and perceptions of students participating in the DEAR Time program. The data were collected from 26 participating 8th graders at Kharisma Bangsa School. The finding showed that the DEAR time program substantially influences students' reading habits, including substantial improvements like vocabulary expansion and an understanding of a broader knowledge base in various subject areas. They assumed that The DEAR Time program effectively captivated their interest, encouraging a daily habit of independent reading with dedicated space and time to delve into books and fostering a sense of curiosity and a passion for reading.

Keywords: *reading habit, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)*

Introduction

In the current fast-paced and digitally interconnected world, reading becomes less necessary for students due to the ease of accessing content on the internet. Whereas, according to (Whitten et al., 2016), reading opened up worldwide avenues for knowledge that non-readers could not access. This statement certainly has a basic foundation that knowledge can be started - and then opened widely through reading. In the academic world, students must make reading as their daily habit. According to Tegmark et al., (2022), the quantity of reading plays a critical role in both the academic achievement of individual students and the overall resilience of democratic societies.

Acheaw & Larson (2021) defined a reading habit as a purposeful and structured study routine characterized by regular and continuous engagement. They emphasized that consistently reading books fosters this habit, contributing to improved comprehension. Furthermore, Eze (2004) suggested that reading habits develop students' attitudes towards reading over time. The research findings indicated that DEAR time activities positively impact fostering reading habits. There are several components of reading habits, according to Cesar et al. (2011), which are attitude toward reading, reading frequency, book reading, time spent on reading (academic and non-academic), and motivation in reading (family and academic environment).

Furthermore, reading is an essential receptive skill that plays a vital role in acquiring information. As stated by Anggraini & Bukhori, (2022) reading allows people to broaden their knowledge and evolve a better clutch of their lives. Students will be able to receive more knowledge through reading. When students become eager to read, it will increase their academic performance. Therefore, reading must be nurtured and utilized in daily life so that it becomes a habit for students. However, building a reading habit is not as easy as picking up a book and starting to read. It needs consistency and continuity of practice (Acheaw & Larson, 2021).

Several similar studies that have been conducted previously have fundamental differences in terms of objects, objectives, methods, and research results to be achieved. DEAR Time activities such as this have previously been researched by Prasetyaningrum & Ruminar (2020) at Brawijaya University. However, the study used 120 respondents from the agriculture department of Brawijaya University as its object. The sampling and object of this research are only limited to students with the same teaching prospects, namely the field of agriculture.

In a comprehensive exploration of the DEAR Time approach, a recent research study conducted in a prominent technical-vocational school in the Philippines sheds valuable light on its efficacy. This investigation, led by Escudra et al., (2023) involved an insightful examination of 12 students and six junior high school teachers as the primary subjects. The study delved into the nuanced

dynamics of the DEAR Time methodology, probing not only its impact on students but also its integration within the teaching practices of educators.

The design of the DEAR Time activity certainly needs to be further analyzed by placing students with different backgrounds in terms of interest and teaching prospects to produce more accurate data. Unlike the previous study, this research will recognize 26 students from two 8th grade at Kharisma Bangsa School with different background interests. This research is expected to provide a more accurate data analysis on how far DEAR Time can be influential.

This study will help to determine and explore what impact does the DEAR Time program have on the reading habits of students at SMP Kharisma Bangsa and how are the students' attitudes towards the DEAR Time program itself. In the end, this study points out how beneficial the DEAR Time program is for the students and whether it has the potential to be implemented in other schools.

Method

Method and Design of the Research

Researchers utilize qualitative design to investigate complicated social phenomena, unearth rich and detailed descriptions, comprehend subjective experiences, and dive into a topic's background and subtleties. According to Alwasilah (2002, p.48), qualitative research helps create hypotheses, particularly in scenarios with small or difficult-to-reach populations and analyzes the implementation and impact of policies and interventions.

Participant

The object of this research is the 8th-grade students at Kharisma Bangsa School. As a data validation procedure, samples will be taken based on the level and gender of each class. The participants in this research are 26 students from 8th grade. There will be six students divided into 50% male and 50% female. This population sampling refers to the main topic of the research, that is, whether or not there is an effect of the DEAR Time Program on students' reading habits at Kharisma Bangsa School. As a procedure to strengthen the data findings and analysis results, the teacher from the 8-grade will be interviewed to get more in-depth information about the implementation and the teacher's perspective on the DEAR Time program.

Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers used interviews as a research instrument to collect the primary data. An interview consists of questions and answers. A semi-structured interview enables the researcher to conduct a thorough analysis and comprehension of someone's thoughts and responses to various events. In the interviews, the researcher will interview the students and the teacher. This instrument is to gain more profound information about DEAR Time, the influence of the DEAR Time program on students' reading habits, and the effectiveness of

DEAR Time on students' and teachers' perceptions.

Technique of Data Collection

In this study, the researcher employed a questionnaire for reading attitude based on Smith's (1991) Adult Survey Reading Attitude (ASRA). The reading attitude questionnaire was based on one developed by Wallbrown, et al (1977). Participants can express their agreement or disagreement with various statements using a five-point Likert scale.

Technique of Data Analysis

The researchers used thematic analysis for analyzing qualitative data to guide the data analysis by going through several stages, such as, understanding the data, coding the data, finding themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and analyzing the results. First is to understand the data, the researcher recognizes all the data that has been collected by transcribing. The second stage is compiling codes or what is commonly referred to as coding. In the process of thematic analysis, the researcher compiled several codes into several categories from the data obtained from the interviews with the interviewees (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The third step involves finding themes, and visually representing the grouping of different codes into specific categories. Following this, a theme review is conducted by revisiting the analyzed codes. Defining and naming themes involves assigning suitable names to the gathered categories. Finally, the last stage of this data analysis is to examine and interpret the results.

Result

The DEAR Time program at Kharisma Bangsa School has demonstrated a substantial influence on students' reading habits. Analysis of the data revealed that students, on average, dedicated approximately 11 minutes of their daily routine to engage in independent reading, typically covering 5 to 10 pages of a book. This not only signifies a positive response to the DEAR Time program but also underscores the commitment of students to enhancing their reading habits. Furthermore, it was evident that students reported improvements in their reading skills. These enhancements included the expansion of vocabulary, a better understanding of textual content, and an increased knowledge base across diverse fields of knowledge. The program's effectiveness in promoting students' reading habits is a promising indication of its potential impact on their cognitive development.

From the preliminary findings, data indicates that 14 out of 26 students consistently participated in the DEAR Time program, while 11 were neutral and 1 did not participate. Additionally, 13 students reported that participation in the program positively impacted their reading habits with 9 reporting neutral and 4 reporting no impact. After analyzing the baseline data on student participation in the DEAR Time program, we conducted follow-up surveys on two themes: enjoyment and difficulty of reading. Our aim was to determine whether the program had any impact.

The DEAR Time program initiates all school activities. Out of the respondents, 11 reported enjoyments in participating in the program, 13 remained neutral, and 2 reported not enjoying it. Although implemented daily, the DEAR Time program failed to cultivate a love for reading amongst students. Out of 26 survey respondents, only 3 reported that the program successfully fostered their enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading. In contrast, 11 students were neutral and 12 others were negative about the program. Several obstacles hinder them from becoming accustomed to reading activities. Distraction (10 out of 26 students) and unfamiliar vocabulary (9 out of 26 students) were the primary factors contributing to their difficulties.

The responses and reactions of Kharisma Bangsa School students to the DEAR Time program were overwhelmingly positive. Data collected from open-ended questions revealed that most students embraced the program as an opportunity to enhance their reading habits. The DEAR Time program, implemented immediately before students entered their classrooms, effectively captivated their interest, encouraging a daily habit of independent reading. Many students found that the program provided them with a dedicated space and time to delve into books, fostering a sense of curiosity and a passion for reading. This positive response was further reinforced by the insights shared in the open-ended responses, where students articulated their enthusiasm for the program and its positive impact on their reading experiences.

Discussion

The results reported in this study indicate a significant impact of the DEAR Time program on students' reading habits at Kharisma Bangsa School. One of the key outcomes of the DEAR Time program implementation was the establishment of a daily reading among students. The average of 11 minutes per day, which covers 5 to 10 pages, dedicated to self-reading indicates a commitment to incorporating reading into their daily routine. This regular engagement with literature is a positive step towards fostering a continuous love for reading. This is supported by a study from (Prasetyaningrum & Ruminar, (2020) that DEAR activity can grow reading habits by applying in 10-15 minutes.

The findings suggest that the improvement in students' reading skills which include vocabulary expansion, better comprehension, and increased knowledge across various fields are noteworthy. Therefore, the eagerness of reading could increase comprehension because of the less pressure the reader felt. The pleasure developed in reading will produce a better comprehension including fluency and develop a higher level of general knowledge (Whitten et al., 2016).

The findings on vocabulary expansion indicate that two of four participants reported enhancements in their reading skills, specifically in the realm of understanding challenging words. Furthermore, these participants shared that their improved comprehension of difficult words has facilitated a more seamless exploration of diverse literary genres. With an expanded vocabulary, they feel better equipped to tackle a broader range of materials, from academic texts to literature outside their usual comfort zones. This increased adaptability not only enriches their reading experience but also fosters a sense of intellectual curiosity. This is consistent with (Fitria, 2019) who stated that when students understand what they read, the more they read, the more they read, the better they will understand the meaning of each word in the English language.

In addition, improved comprehension proved that most of them stated that DEAR Time has helped their ability to comprehend complex sentences and words. The DEAR time program has forced students to read subject books and also exposed students to many topics that are not covered by the school subjects. Therefore, the DEAR Time is really helpful for them to stimulate them to read books more. In a broader sense, the study hints that the improvement in reading skills is also linked to gaining more knowledge. This idea is supported by Anggraini & Bukhori (2022), who say that reading gives people a chance to learn more and understand life better. Engaging with diverse texts allows readers to explore different perspectives, cultures, and experiences, fostering a more comprehensive worldview.

Furthermore, the students' increased knowledge has been found in this study. Engaging in reading books offers various benefits, such as expanding one's knowledge repertoire, gaining access to new information, enhancing the ability to explain concepts to others, improving concentration, and serving as a source of entertainment (Rintaningrum, 2019). This suggests that beyond the improvement in reading skills, students are also acquiring valuable insights and information through their reading habits. The numerous advantages of reading contribute not only to academic growth but also to the overall enrichment of students' understanding and experiences. In the findings of prior research studies, the DEAR Time Program exhibited a consistently positive impact on the participants. Prasetyaningrum & Ruminar, (2020), in their investigation of the DEAR Time Program, successfully discerned an improvement in reading quality, characterized by a continuous increase in interest in this productive activity. This finding aligns with the present study, where participants, on average, reported a shift in their perception of reading following their engagement in the DEAR Time activity. Moreover, Escuadra et al., (2023) effectively identified the internal and environmental influences on the progress of DEAR Time. The study revealed that factors such as parental involvement, individual motivation, and self-interest played pivotal roles as determinants for enhancing reading habits. Similarly, in the current study, students acknowledged that physical changes in the environment,

such as the arrangement of chairs and the class atmosphere during reading, as well as external influences from students who did not actively participate in the activities, could potentially have a negative impact.

Additionally, Tado, (2019) study, conducted at The School of Education (SED) of San Isidro College (SIC) with 129 students, yielded significant and positive outcomes. The study highlighted an enhancement in students' maturity and strengthened comprehension, along with an expansion of their vocabulary after their participation in the DEAR Time Program. In the current study, the acknowledgment of students' increased ability to comprehend various genres of books within 5-10 minutes of reading time per program serves as the foundational assumption supporting the observed improvements in vocabulary and comprehension.

Due to the implementation of the DEAR Time program in Kharisma Bangsa before the lesson, it is a sort of challenge for students because some of them get stuck in traffic jams. Therefore, to address the issue and ensure the inclusivity of all students, a rescheduling of the DEAR time program is recommended. One viable solution could be to shift the program to occur before lunch. By doing so, all of the students in the classroom can actively engage in the program without being hindered by external factors such as traffic delays. This adjustment aims to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of the DEAR Time initiative, fostering a conducive environment for all students to benefit from independent reading without encountering logistical obstacles.

Based on the current findings, we hypothesize that continued implementation of dedicated reading programs, such as DEAR Time, in the educational field can contribute significantly to students' cognitive development, academic performance, and communication skills. The positive impact is not only limited to reading, but also has the potential to improve critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication among students. For the future researchers could explore the long-term impact of such programs on academic outcomes and personal development.

Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of the DEAR Time program on students' reading habits, particularly focusing on junior high school students. The research reveals that the DEAR Time program is an effective tool for enhancing reading habits and academic performance among students. However, the implementation of the program leads to differences in academic achievements that are influenced by factors like reading duration, book types, and the reading environment. Additionally, obstacles to the DEAR Time program include students' lack of preparation due to morning traffic delays or forgetting to bring their books,

hindering the smooth implementation of the initiative.

Furthermore, the study may explore more how this program may not only impact immediate reading behaviors but could also have broader implications for cognitive development, and educational practices, and potentially contribute to the creation of a culture of independent reading within the school or beyond. The title suggests a focus on understanding the multifaceted effects of the DEAR Time program, indicating its potential significance beyond just the enhancement of reading habits as mentioned before.

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