

The Use Of Educational Comics To Increase The Reading Interest Of 5th Grade Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

Reading interest is one of the important factors that affects the learning success of elementary school students, but low reading interest is still a problem because learning tends to focus on textbooks that are not very engaging. This study aims to find out the effect of educational comic media on the reading interest of fifth-grade elementary school students. The research uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method using a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design, conducted at SDN Ciledug 01 in Bekasi Regency in the even semester of the 2025/2026 school year. The sample consisted of 88 students, with 45 students in the experimental class and 43 in the control class, determined through a saturated sampling technique. Data were collected through a reading interest questionnaire before and after treatment, then analyzed using normality tests, homogeneity tests, independent sample t-tests, and N-Gain tests with the help of SPSS Statistics 31. The research results show that the data are normally distributed and homogeneous. An independent sample t-test obtained a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, so H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. The average N-Gain for the experimental class was 45.95% (medium category), higher than the control class at 34.23%. It can be concluded that using educational comic media has a significant effect on the reading interest of fifth-grade elementary school students and can be considered as an alternative learning medium to support literacy culture in elementary schools.

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Introduction

Reading is one of the basic skills that forms the main foundation in the learning process, because through reading activities, students gain information, broaden their horizons, and develop critical thinking skills from elementary school age. A consistently growing interest in reading among students will encourage success in learning across various subjects, as students who enjoy reading tend to understand material more easily, actively seek information, and are better prepared to complete academic tasks (Bangsawan, 2018; Firman et al., 2021). Unfortunately, this ideal situation has not fully happened in the field. The reading learning process in many elementary schools still focuses on monotonous textbooks, dominated by long texts without interesting illustrations, making students easily bored and less enthusiastic about participating in reading activities (Utami et al., 2018).

The low reading interest among students is also reflected in the national literacy achievements. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey showed that Indonesian students' literacy scores are still below the average of OECD member countries (OECD, 2024). This low literacy achievement is closely linked to students' weak interest in reading from the early education levels. In response to this situation, the government launched the National Literacy Movement in 2016 (Tampubolon, 2025), but its implementation at the school level still needs support from innovative and engaging learning media to genuinely foster students' reading interest.

The initial observation at SDN Ciledug 01 supports this picture. Fifth-grade students' interest in reading is quite low, shown by their minimal participation in reading activities, difficulty understanding the content, and lack of enthusiasm in text-based discussions. This low interest in reading is also influenced by the limited variety of learning media, the dominance of long and uninteresting texts, as well as distractions from gadgets and digital media among students. One potential learning media that could address this issue is educational comics. Educational comics combine visual elements, text, and simple storylines that are contextual, making them more appealing to elementary school students. Considering their development characteristics, fifth-grade students are at the concrete operational stage, so they respond better to visual media than to long, abstract texts (Arsyad in Suparman et al., 2020).

Several previous studies have examined the role of comic media in students' reading interest and learning motivation. Indriyani (2024) studied the effect of comic picture media on the reading interest of fourth-grade madrasah ibtidaiyah students and found that comic media could increase students' engagement and enthusiasm in reading activities, even though the study was still limited to one grade level and a madrasah context, and had not yet used comprehensively measurable indicators of reading interest. Afrida (2020) found that using comics can boost students' motivation and activeness during learning because the interesting pictures and colors stimulate students' curiosity to read. In line with that, Trisanti and Hikmat (2021) concluding that the availability of visual learning media like comics and picture books can boost students' motivation and reading skills, but the study is descriptive and hasn't used an experimental design to measure changes in reading interest quantitatively. Cahyani et al. (2024) also emphasized that research specifically testing the effect of educational comic media on elementary school students' reading interest, especially fifth graders, is still limited, indicating a research gap that needs further investigation.

Based on this gap, this study is designed to systematically examine the effect of using educational comic media on the reading interest of fifth-grade elementary school students through a quasi-experimental method, by comparing students' reading interest before and after the implementation of educational comic media without changing the existing class structure. This study uses more comprehensive reading interest indicators, including

reading enjoyment, awareness of the benefits of reading, reading frequency, and the amount of reading (Sudarsana & Bastino in Afriani et al., 2021), so it is expected to provide more comprehensive empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of educational comic media. The novelty of this research lies in testing the effect of educational comics with the theme 'Caring for the Environment' in Indonesian language lessons on the reading interest of fifth-grade students using a quasi-experimental design with a control group, which has not been widely studied in previous research. The aim of this study is to find out the reading interest of fifth-grade students before and after learning using educational comics, to find out the differences in reading interest between students who use educational comics and those who follow conventional lessons, as well as to find out the effect of using educational comics on the reading interest of fifth-grade elementary school students.

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method, specifically a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design, carried out at SDN Ciledug 01, Setu District, Bekasi Regency, in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The population includes all fifth-grade students totaling 88 students, and the sample was determined using a saturated sampling technique so that the entire population became the research sample. It consists of 45 students in class VA as the experimental group receiving learning treatment using educational comic media with the theme 'Caring for the Environment,' and 43 students in class VB as the control group following conventional learning. Data was collected through a closed-ended questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale (1–4) developed based on four reading interest indicators: enjoyment of reading, awareness of the benefits of reading, reading frequency, and quantity of reading, supported by observation, interviews, and documentation data. The questionnaire instrument was tested for validity using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient ($r_{table} = 0.374$ at a 5% significance level with 28 trial respondents) and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.977 (very reliable), while the feasibility of the comic media was validated by media experts and obtained a feasibility percentage of 88.89% with a very valid category; the pretest and posttest data of both groups were then analyzed quantitatively with the help of SPSS Statistics 31 through normality testing using Shapiro-Wilk, homogeneity testing using Levene's Test, hypothesis testing using an independent sample t-test at a 0.05 significance level, and N-Gain testing referring to Hake's (1999) formula to determine the level of increase in students' reading interest in each group.

Hasil dan Pembahasan

1. Research Results

The research was conducted in April 2026 involving all fifth-grade students at SDN Ciledug 01, totaling 88 students, divided into class VA as the experimental group (45 students) who received lessons using educational comic media, and class VB as the control group (43 students) who followed conventional learning. The learning material used was Indonesian language with the topic of Environmental Awareness. In the experimental class, the learning emphasized student activities in discovering concepts through discussion and active reading. menggunakan komik, sementara kelas kontrol menggunakan metode The lecture and Q&A were mostly dominated by the teacher. Before being used in learning, the educational comic media was first validated by media experts using an assessment instrument with 18 indicators. The validation results showed a score of 64 out of a maximum score of 72, which is equivalent to 88.89% with a very valid category, so the media is declared suitable for use in learning.

Tabel 1. Pretest and Posttest Results of the Experimental Class and the Control Class

<i>Class</i>	<i>Test</i>	<i>Minimum Value</i>	<i>Max Value</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Experiment	Pretest	36	69	51,93	8,669
Experiment	Posttest	52	77	65,02	6,433
Control	Pretest	37	62	50,70	6,675
Control	Posttest	47	68	59,91	6,152

Source: The data was processed by the researcher, 2026

Table 1 shows that the initial conditions of both groups were relatively equal before treatment, with the difference in pretest averages not being too big (51.93 compared to 50.70). After the treatment was given, both groups experienced an increase in average scores, but the increase in the experimental class was higher than in the control class, going from 51.93 to 65.02 in the experimental class, while the control class went up from 50.70 to 59.91.

Before hypothesis testing was carried out, the data were first tested for analysis prerequisites. The normality test using Shapiro-Wilk showed that all significance values for the pretest and posttest data in both groups were above 0.05 (ranging from 0.130 to 0.561), meaning all the data were normally distributed. The homogeneity test using Levene's Test obtained a significance value of 0.511 (> 0.05), indicating that the variances of both groups were homogeneous. With both conditions met, hypothesis testing was continued using an independent samples t-test.

Table 2. T-Test and N-Gain Results

<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
Independent Samples t-Test (Posttest)	Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000	H_0 rejected, H_1 accepted
N-Gain Experimental Class (n=45)	Average 45,95%; medium category	Increasing
N-Gain Control Class (n=43)	Average 34,23%; medium category	Increasing, lower than the experiment

Source: The data was processed by the researcher, 2026

The hypothesis test results showed a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is smaller than the 0.05 significance level, so H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. This finding proves that there is a significant difference between the reading interests of students in the experimental class and the control class, which means that using educational comics has a significant impact on the reading interest of fifth-grade elementary school students. The N-Gain test results reinforce this finding, with the average N-Gain for the experimental class at 45.95% and the control class at 34.23%. Although both fall into the medium category, the increase in the experimental class is higher with a difference of 11.72 percentage points compared to the control class.

Observations during the learning process also support this finding, with teacher activities reaching an implementation percentage of 86.67% (very good category) and student activities reaching 93.33% (very good category). Regarding reading interest indicators, the indicators for reading enjoyment, awareness of the benefits of reading, and reading frequency in the experimental class each reached 82%, while the reading quantity indicator reached 83%. On the other hand, in the control class, the percentage for each indicator ranged from 75%–79%, showing that educational comic media not only increases students' interest in reading activities but also helps form more sustainable reading habits.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study show that using educational comic media has a significant impact on the reading interest of fifth-grade elementary school students, in line with Piaget's cognitive development theory (1952), which explains that children aged 7–11 are in the concrete operational stage, making it easier for them to understand information through visual representations rather than abstract concepts. Educational comics that combine visual illustrations with simple narrative text are relevant to the thinking characteristics of fifth graders because they help students construct meaning through clear visual support. These findings also support Vygotsky's (1978) view on the importance of social interaction in learning through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development; educational comics not only serve as reading material but also as a means that helps students build understanding through activities like reading together, discussing, and exchanging ideas with teachers and peers.

From a language development perspective, this study supports Snow's (2002) view that elementary school students begin to enter the stage of reading comprehension, meaning they not only recognize words and sentences but are also able to understand the main ideas and messages contained in the text. Presenting material through educational comics with concise sentences and supportive illustrations helps students understand the content more effectively, which increases their interest in reading. The boost in reading interest is also related to learning motivation; according to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), reading interest develops when students have enjoyable reading experiences that can spark intrinsic motivation. The stories in educational comics, which are close to students' daily lives, encourage ongoing curiosity until they fully grasp the material presented.

The findings of this study are in line with several previous studies that showed the effectiveness of comics as a learning medium. Aryantika et al. (2025) found that educational comics can increase the reading interest of fifth-grade students, while Umairah and Amaliyah (2022) obtained similar results through the development of digital comic media using the Research and Development method. Handayani and Koeswanti (2020) also developed comic media as teaching materials that are suitable for fostering the reading interest of elementary school students. Unlike these three development-based studies, Willya et al. (2023), through a literature review, concluded that digital comics play a role in increasing students' reading interest, and Rasmet et al. (2025) Through a systematic literature review, it is confirmed that comic-based learning can increase students' motivation, engagement, and participation. This study complements those findings by providing empirical evidence through a quasi-experimental design that directly compares the experimental group and the control group, while also using more comprehensive reading interest indicators compared to Indriyani (2024), which was still limited to a single grade level.

These results also support the views of Firman et al. (2021) and Amelia and Kurniaman (2020) that reading interest is influenced by internal factors (attention, motivation, reading ability) and external factors (the role of teachers, environment, availability of reading materials). Educational comic media act as an external factor that can create an engaging learning environment, thereby encouraging the growth of internal factors such as students' interest and motivation to read. Along the same lines, Ntau and Sarindat (2025) also emphasize that the availability of engaging learning media is one of the external factors determining reading interest in today's digital era.

Although the research results show a significant effect, the N-Gain category in both groups is still in the medium category, which indicates that the improvement in reading interest has not reached a high level. This condition is likely influenced by the limited treatment time, which was only carried out in two sessions, so the habit of reading using

comics has not taken place over a longer period. Therefore, the continuous and consistent use of educational comics on various learning topics is expected to have a more optimal impact on increasing elementary school students' reading interest.

Conclusion

Based on the research results on the effect of educational comic media on the reading interest of 5th grade students at SDN Ciledug 01 for the 2025/2026 school year, it can be concluded that students' reading interest in the experimental class increased after learning using educational comic media. This is seen from the average pretest score of 51.93, which went up to 65.02 in the posttest, with an N-Gain of 45.95% (medium category). There was also a difference in the increase in reading interest between the experimental class and the control class, with the experimental class having an N-Gain of 45.95%, higher than the control class's 34.23%. Next, the results of the independent samples t-test showed a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is lower than the 0.05 significance level, indicating that using educational comic media has a significant effect on fifth-grade elementary students' reading interest. This finding implies the importance of educational comic media as an alternative learning tool for teachers to boost reading interest while also strengthening literacy culture in elementary schools. Teachers are encouraged to apply educational comic media consistently in Indonesian language lessons, while schools are expected to provide facilities and training for developing comic media to support literacy programs. Future research is suggested to extend the treatment duration and expand the sample scope to achieve higher categories of reading interest improvement.

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