

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

The development of early literacy is crucial as a strong foundation for preschool students' academic success and life growth (Maureen et al., 2022). Literacy is an initial ability that must be possessed by every individual, so that is why the development of literacy from an early age is essential (Oktaviani & Oktaria, 2021). Research has consistently shown that early literacy can boost children's confidence and help foster a positive attitude toward school, which will lead to their academic success (Hill, 2019; Leahy & Fitzpatrick, 2017). Along the same line, children in literacy-rich environments show positive effects on their social-emotional skills, such as empathy and communication, in which their parents play a major role (Oktaviani & Oktaria, 2021).

The core of all literacy is reading development which involves the ability to understand spoken words and elaborate written words, also the most important is a deep understanding of a text (Adedokun & Olufunke, 2013). With the importance of reading development, increasing children's engagement in reading is necessary for better literacy development (Choiriyah et al., 2023). Children's engagement in reading itself is an active involvement of children in the reading process, which includes cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects (Wigfield et al., 2008). Among these dimensions, behavioral engagement is particularly important for preschool students because it reflects observable behaviors during reading activities, such as attention, participation, positive behavior, and persistence

(Wigfield et al., 2008). Research has shown that behavioral engagement in reading is crucial for children's long-term literacy development and academic achievement (Lee et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2023). Children who have good behavioral engagement in reading from an early age will usually develop a love of reading, which will lead to improved literacy skills and academic success in the future (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Quinn et al., 2015). With the various positive impacts described, it is important to pay attention to children's engagement, especially behavioral engagement in reading, so that the children can develop better literacy.

Despite the importance of reading behavioral engagement in early literacy development, many children still experience low behavioral engagement in reading activities, which may hinder the development of their foundational reading skills (Lee et al., 2021; Wigfield et al., 2008). Several studies indicate that children who show limited involvement in reading tend to have fewer opportunities to interact with print, resulting in inadequate reading skills and an increased risk of reading difficulties (Seventilofa, 2024; Wijayanti, 2020). Reading difficulties are something that should be prevented from happening to children, because children who experience reading difficulties will tend to have social anxiety, as their inability to read fluently often makes them feel inferior, isolated, and afraid of being judged by peers or teachers (Kargiotidis & Manolitsis, 2024). Therefore, increasing children's behavioral engagement in reading is crucial to prevent them from experiencing reading difficulties.

The problem at this time is that children quickly get bored and show low behavioral engagement in reading (Sihotang & Damanik, 2025). This issue is closely related to the literacy challenges faced by Indonesian students. Results from

the Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) indicate that literacy achievement in Indonesia remains relatively low, highlighting the importance of fostering children's behavioral engagement in reading from an early age. The reason for children's low behavioral engagement in reading is because the media used are not interactive and imaginative (Choiriyah et al., 2023; Oktaviani & Oktaria, 2021). Research shows that children will be engaged in reading when the media used are interactive and contain images, because children tend to respond better to visual and interactive elements that make it easier for them to understand the story (Munawarah et al., 2024; Oktavianti & Nur, 2024). Interactive and imaginative media that stimulate children's imagination are the key to increasing their engagement in reading, and Big Books have the potential to serve as a learning media that supports these interactive and imaginative aspects.

Big Book is a picture book with a short text and a large picture size, making it easier for children to see and understand the contents (Haniya & Hasibuan, 2024). Teachers often use this book to teach preschool students in storytelling activities, because this book can make the reading more fun for students (Zainudin et al., 2023). With its unique characteristics, namely, full of colors, attractive images, words that are easy to understand, and simple plots that children like, making this book effectively supports student behavioral engagement in reading (Oktaviana et al., 2021; Wigfield et al., 2008).

However, the effectiveness of a Big Book also depends on the reading material presented in it. The selection of appropriate reading material is very important because if the material is not relevant, it will make children feel bored and lose their engagement in reading (Rokhmansyah et al., 2021). It should also be

noted that reading materials plays an important role in shaping children's cognitive domain and can also provide knowledge and values that are meaningful for their daily life, so the selection of relevant reading materials is very important to consider (Achsani, 2018). One of the relevant contents for reading materials is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because this content can strengthen children's cognitive domain and increase their awareness of important global issues.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a global agenda set by the United Nations to make the world a better and more sustainable place for everyone (UN, 2015). This agenda is not only for adults, but also for children. The international community agrees that children are the present and the future, so they have a very crucial role in society (UNICEF, 2018). This highlights that children should be guided to develop the values and skills they will need in the future. Therefore, making the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as content for reading materials is very suitable because it is in line with the global agenda set by the United Nations.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of 17 goals and one of the goals is Good Health and Well Being (UN, 2015). Good Health and well-being is the 3rd goal which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all people, at all ages (WHO, 2023). Health and Well-being are important at every stage of life, especially in the early stages. Making this 3rd goal as a content for reading material will certainly play a role in the success of this global agenda, especially in increasing children's awareness about healthy lives and well-being.

However, previous studies have rarely discussed this global issue, especially in the use of Big Books with content related to SDGs, particularly SDG 3. Most studies discussing Big Books only focus on content about everyday life stories without providing a broader understanding of global issues (Kusna & Puspitasari, 2023; Kusumawati et al., 2022; Oktaviana et al., 2021). In fact, introducing global issues such as health issues from an early age is very important in shaping children's knowledge about the wider world (UNICEF, 2018). Thus, integrating global issues, namely SDGs, especially SDG 3, into Big Books is very important so that children not only can engage in reading but also be involved in facing global challenges.

In addition, based on the preliminary observation conducted by the researcher at one of the kindergartens in Singaraja, it was found that books have not yet become the main media in classroom learning. The teachers there more often use flashcards and other visual media in learning activities. Besides that, the available reading materials are still limited in presenting meaningful and relevant content, especially those related to global issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3) has not been much integrated into the existing reading materials, and these values are only introduced through posters, simple visual media, or songs. These limitations indicate the need to develop interactive media that can provide reading materials based on the SDGs, particularly SDG 3, so that it can support children's behavioral engagement in reading while at the same time enriching their knowledge about Good Health and Well-being.

Therefore, this study aims to develop a Big Book as an interactive reading media that integrates SDGs-based reading materials, particularly SDG 3, to support

preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading. Behavioral engagement was specifically selected because preschool students tend to demonstrate their engagement through observable behaviors during reading activities, such as attention, participation, and persistence. Thus, the developed Big Book is expected to function as an interesting reading media while also providing meaningful reading materials related to Good Health and Well-Being for preschool students from an early age.

1.2. Research Problem

To identify the problems in this study, the researcher conducted a preliminary observation at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja, Buleleng, Bali. The results of this preliminary observation showed several challenges in supporting preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading, especially related to the limited reading activities, the use of learning media, and the availability of relevant reading materials.

The first problem identified at Pelita Kasih Kindergarten was the limited presence of reading activities. Reading did not appear to be a priority in the learning process, and as a result, it was not conducted regularly. This might be due to the fact that the current focus of the learning process is still on developing motor skills and play-based activities. However, limited exposure to reading could lead to low reading engagement among students, which may negatively affect their academic development in the long run.

The second problem is that books have not yet become the prioritized media in classroom learning activities. The teachers there mostly use flashcards and other

visual media in learning activities, while the use of books in learning activities is still very limited. This, can reduce students' opportunities to interact with texts, even though such interaction is important in developing children's reading habits from an early age.

The third problem is the unavailability of Big Books as one of the learning media in the classroom. Big Books, with their unique characteristics such as large size, attractive illustrations, and simple texts, should be utilized as an interactive shared reading medium. The absence of Big Books there makes the students lose the opportunity to gain enjoyable reading experiences and to stimulate their interest in reading activities.

And the last problem found by the researcher is the limited availability of reading materials that present meaningful and relevant content, especially those related to global issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, Good Health and Well-being (SDG3) has not been much integrated into the available reading materials there. From the observations conducted, the researcher found that Pelita Kasih Kindergarten has already introduced the values of SDG 3 to the students, but these values were only introduced through posters or simple visual media and a song, not yet in the form of reading materials that can be used interactively with the students. This condition may limit the students' opportunities to enhance their reading engagement while at the same time fostering their awareness of the importance of Good Health and Well-being from an early age.

1.3. Research Limitations

This study focuses on the development of a Big Book integrated with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a reading media to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading. The scope of the study is limited to preschool students aged 4–5 years at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja. The Big Book developed in this study integrates SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) as the main content. Therefore, the study does not cover other age levels and does not include SDGs beyond SDG 3.

1.4. Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the needs of preschool students and teachers regarding reading media for shared reading activities to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja?
2. How is a Big Book integrated with SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-Being” designed and developed as reading media for shared reading activities to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja?
3. How is the quality of the developed Big Book integrated with SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-Being” as reading media for shared reading activities to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja?

1.5. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the needs of preschool students and teachers regarding reading media for shared reading activities to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja.
2. To design and develop a Big Book integrated with SDG 3 "Good Health and Well-Being" as reading media for shared reading activities to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja.
3. To evaluate the quality of the developed Big Book integrated with SDG 3 "Good Health and Well-Being" as reading media for shared reading activities to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading at PAUD Pelita Kasih Singaraja.

1.6. Significance of Research

This research is expected to provide contributions to both theoretical and practical aspects:

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to expanding the theoretical studies on Big Books as interactive reading media, as well as to broaden the theoretical studies on behavioral engagement in reading. In addition, this study can also enrich the literature on the integration of global issue content, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), into children's reading materials.

2. Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study is expected to be felt by the teachers, students, and future researchers.

a) For Teacher

This study is expected to help teachers in providing interactive and interesting reading media through the development of a Big Book, which can be used as a supportive and effective learning media in the classroom.

b) For Preschool Student

The Big Book developed in this study is expected to support preschool students' behavioral engagement in reading from an early age. Through the integration of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) content, this media also aims to provide meaningful reading materials related to Good Health and Well-Being for preschool students.

c) For Other Researchers

This study is expected to serve as a reference for other researchers who are interested in developing interactive learning media, particularly those that integrate global issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).