

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Reading literacy is an essential skill that supports children's overall development. In educational contexts, it lays the foundation for children's cognitive and academic development (Jamil et al., 2026). Furthermore, reading literacy supports the development of children's social competencies, including their ability to understand and empathize with the feelings and thoughts of others (Kozak & Recchia, 2019). Despite these benefits, reading literacy in Indonesia remains at a concerning level. Based on statistics published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Indonesia ranked 100th out of 280 nations in reading literacy in 2022. Similarly, OECD (2023) reported that reading literacy among Indonesian children remains relatively low. Surya (2025) found that the Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) reading literacy assessment revealed low levels of reading literacy among young learners, with their critical thinking skills and cognitive processes remaining at a basic level. These findings suggest that strengthening early reading literacy is essential for preparing children for future academic success and overall growth.

The foundations of reading literacy are established during the preschool years, making this stage essential for preparing children for subsequent levels of education. Preschool children, generally between the ages of two and five, are in an essential period of growth and development and are considered to be in a golden age of learning (Lestari et al., 2022; Wildová & Kropáčková, 2015). During this

period, children begin to develop early literacy skills through reading activities that include introducing letters, sounds, pictures, and language patterns. However, literacy instruction is more effective when children actively participate in reading activities, as active involvement can make learning experiences more meaningful and memorable (Sumiarni et al., 2024). Moreover, consistent participation during reading activities contributes to children's thinking skills and later academic achievement (Barber & Klauda, 2020). Therefore, supporting children's active participation during reading activities plays a significant role in early literacy instruction by allowing them to engage in meaningful and enjoyable literacy experiences.

Children's active observable participation during reading activities is referred to as behavioral reading engagement. According to Guthrie et al. (2004), behavioral reading engagement involves active and enthusiastic participation, sustained focus, and consistent effort throughout reading activities. It is reflected in positive reading behaviors, such as participating in discussion and managing actions during reading activities (Matyakhani et al., 2024). One instructional approach that can facilitate behavioral reading engagement is the shared reading approach (Fakhriya, 2022). During shared reading, the teacher and children explore stories through storytelling and illustrated texts, allowing children to actively participate in the reading process while developing their thinking skills and understanding the messages conveyed in the story (Yulianti & Sidik, 2024). Although shared reading provides opportunities for children's active participation, appropriate reading media are also needed.

In the implementation of the shared reading approach, the reading media should attract children's attention (Muhaimin & Juandi, 2023). It should also be aligned with children's developmental characteristics. According to Piaget, as cited in Pakpahan & Saragih (2022), preschool children at the preoperational stage rely more on visual perception rather than on logical reasoning. Consequently, reading media with clear and attractive visual features are more suitable for preschool children because they help encourage interaction and an enjoyable learning environment (Pebriani et al., 2026).

Besides selecting appropriate reading media, the content presented through the media is also important in supporting children's behavioral reading engagement. Reading material that integrates authentic contexts related to children's daily lives can promote their active participation during reading activities and support more optimal literacy development (Fahmiyah et al., 2025). In addition to developing literacy skills, reading content should also provide sustainability values and global citizenship (Mahayanti et al., 2026). One important sustainability topic suitable for preschool children is Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6). According to the United Nations (2025), Sustainable Development Goal 6 focuses on ensuring that all people have access to water and sanitation while promoting their sustainable management. Integrating SDG values at the preschool level is beneficial for both children and sustainable development, as it helps children develop knowledge and habits related to clean water and sanitation, while contributing to sustainable practices within schools and their wider community (Hartwig, 2024; Hernández & Hernández-león, 2026; Sulistyowati et al., 2025). Therefore, the combination of developmentally appropriate reading media and meaningful reading content serves

to support behavioral reading engagement while also contributing to early literacy and understanding of sustainability.

In contrast to these expectations, preliminary observations in Class A1 at TK Aura Sukma Insani Singaraja showed several challenges during shared reading activities. The reading media available in the classroom were limited in size and content variety. In addition, the books generally contained approximately five sentences per page and included relatively difficult vocabulary. The reading materials also mainly focused on numbers and Indonesian folklore, providing limited opportunities for children to learn essential concepts closely related to their daily experiences. During shared reading activities, some students were unable to maintain focus, were easily distracted by their surroundings, and showed limited participation, indicating low behavioral reading engagement. These conditions suggest the need for appropriate reading media that provide greater variety, support students' behavioral reading engagement, and integrate meaningful concepts relevant to their daily lives, such as clean water and sanitation.

Among the various learning media, the Big Book has the potential to address these needs, because it is specifically designed to engage children. According to Karges-Bone, as cited in Hall & O'Connor (2006), Big Book is characterized by its large format, simple and engaging story, and enlarged text and illustrations. Their large print, colorful illustrations, and engaging features help maintain children's attention, create enjoyable and meaningful reading experiences, and support language and literacy development (Nalantha et al., 2018). These characteristics of the Big Book can encourage children's active involvement in reading activities (Yansyah et al., 2022). As printed materials, Big Books allow more direct

interaction between children and the reader than some digital media, which helps children understand the story better and recall its sequence in greater detail (Munzer et al., 2019; Reich & Yau, 2019). Previous studies have demonstrated that Big Books are effective educational media for improving early literacy among preschool children through their large text, vibrant illustrations, and interactive elements (Gobi et al., 2024; Mu'alimah et al., 2024; Niasari & Budiarti, 2025). In addition, Big Books have been successfully developed to integrate various contextual themes, such as flood disaster mitigation, science, and sexuality education, into preschool learning (Haniya & Hasibuan, 2024; Pribadi et al., 2021; Purba & Silaban, 2024). However, studies focused on developing Big Books that specifically support behavioral reading engagement while integrating Sustainable Development Goal 6 content remain limited. Therefore, this research was conducted to address both the practical needs identified in TK Aura Sukma Insani Singaraja and the existing research gap.

1.2 Problem Identification

The results of the preliminary observation at TK Aura Sukma Insani Singaraja showed that the learning media used in reading activities were limited in size and content variety, and in the use of age-appropriate language. During reading activities, some students were less focused and were easily distracted by their surroundings. Moreover, the reading content provided by teachers was limited to topics such as numbers and Indonesian folklore, and had not yet integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into reading activities. Therefore, this study aims to address these issues by developing a Big Book as shared reading media that

supports students' behavioral reading engagement and integrates Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) content.

The content presented in the Big Book introduces students to simple water conservation practices and helps them understand the importance of clean water and sanitation in their daily lives. Integrating Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) into the story provides meaningful learning experiences by introducing sustainability values. Supported by colorful illustrations and simple language, the Big Book is expected to attract students' attention and support their focus during shared reading activities.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

This research focused on developing a Big Book for preschool students at TK Aura Sukma Insani Singaraja. The Big Book was designed as shared reading media that integrates Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) as its main content to support students' behavioral reading engagement during shared reading activities. Furthermore, the Big Book was implemented only with a small group of preschool students and did not involve students from other educational levels.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the research background, several questions can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the needs of teachers and students regarding reading media that support behavioral reading engagement, and clean water and sanitation?

2. How is the reading media that promotes clean water and sanitation developed to engage students in reading activities?
3. What is the quality of the developed reading media for early childhood learners?

1.5 Research Objectives

The research has several objectives, including the following:

1. To identify the needs of teachers and students regarding reading media that support behavioral reading engagement, and clean water and sanitation.
2. To describe the development process of reading media that promotes clean water and sanitation.
3. To assess the quality of the developed reading media.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The results of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically, as outlined below:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study can contribute to early literacy research and sustainability education for preschool students by highlighting how a Big Book as reading media supports students' behavioral reading engagement and the integration of clean water and sanitation content, especially at the preschool level.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

- a. Provide teachers, schools, and parents with the Big Book as innovative, engaging reading media.

- b. Build students' understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the concept of clean water and sanitation, through the developed Big Book.
- c. Contribute to reducing environmental issues by fostering early sustainable habits and knowledge among preschool students through the Big Book.
- d. Offer a valuable reference for further research that uses the same topic, or that is still related to this research.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

A. Big Book

According to Karges-Bone, as cited in Hall & O'Connor (2006), the Big Book is a large-format reading book that contains enlarged text and illustrations. It is used as learning media to facilitate students' understanding of instructional content by incorporating engaging illustrations, carefully selected vocabulary, repetitive words, and simple storylines that capture children's enthusiasm and promote active involvement in the reading activities (Tarigan et al., 2025).

B. Shared Reading

Parkes (2024) states that shared reading is a reading activity in which the teacher reads a story aloud using an enlarged book, allowing students to view the text and illustrations together. This activity provides children with

an enjoyable reading experience, supports their comprehension of text, and fosters their interest in reading.

C. Behavioral Reading Engagement

According to Guthrie et al (2004), Behavioral reading engagement refers to students' active and enthusiastic participation, sustained attention, and consistent effort during reading activities.

D. Sustainable Development Goal 6

According to UNESCO (2017), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a universal framework to create a peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous world by addressing critical global challenges. Among these goals, Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) aims to ensure the availability of safe and clean water and adequate sanitation for everyone.

1.7.2 Operational Definition

A. Big Book

In this study, the Big Book is defined as the learning media developed by the researcher to support students' behavioral reading engagement during shared reading activities.

B. Shared Reading

For this study, shared reading is defined as a reading approach in which the teacher reads the developed Big Book aloud while engaging students to observe the illustrations, discuss the story, and repeat simple words or phrases together.

C. Behavioral Reading Engagement

In this study, behavioral reading engagement refers to students' observable behaviors during shared reading activities using the developed Big Book. It is reflected through maintaining attention to the reading activity, actively participating in discussion, showing positive responses to the story, and demonstrating consistent effort throughout the reading activity.

D. Sustainable Development Goal 6

In the present study, SDG 6 is defined as the values integrated into the developed Big Book to introduce students to the importance of using water wisely and conserving water through the story.

