



## Developing a Creative Learning Model to Increase Middle School Students' Interest in Reading

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### ABSTRACT

The decline in reading interest among middle school students is a growing concern in the field of education. Despite the increasing availability of digital content, traditional reading remains critical for developing cognitive and analytical skills. Previous studies have highlighted the need for innovative learning models to engage students and foster a love for reading. This study aims to develop and evaluate a creative learning model designed to enhance middle school students' interest in reading. The model focuses on incorporating interactive and engaging activities that connect reading materials with students' daily lives and interests. A mixed-method approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The sample consisted of 150 middle school students from three schools. A pretest-posttest design was employed to assess changes in students' reading interest, complemented by interviews and observations for qualitative insights. The findings revealed a significant increase in students' interest in reading, as evidenced by improved survey scores and positive feedback from both students and teachers. The creative learning model effectively engaged students, making reading more enjoyable and relevant to their personal experiences. The creative learning model proved successful in increasing middle school students' reading interest. It emphasizes the importance of developing innovative teaching strategies to foster a lasting interest in reading, contributing to improved academic outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Educational Innovation, Reading Interest, Student Engagement*

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## INTRODUCTION

The decline in reading interest among middle school students has become a global concern, particularly in the context of digital media's growing influence (Ong et al., 2021). Research has shown that while reading remains essential for academic success, students increasingly prefer interactive and digital content over traditional books. This trend raises the need for more engaging and creative learning models to rekindle students'

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passion for reading (A. Meng et al., 2021). Understanding the significance of reading for cognitive and language development is crucial in shaping effective educational strategies. Teachers and educators face challenges in creating learning environments that foster a lasting interest in reading, which is essential for students' long-term educational outcomes (Younes et al., 2021). Therefore, innovative approaches that integrate creativity and interactivity into the reading process are needed to address this issue.

The problem addressed in this study is the decreasing interest in reading among middle school students, which has been linked to various factors such as the increasing use of digital media, lack of engaging materials, and traditional teaching methods that fail to capture students' attention (Di Caprio et al., 2022). Previous studies indicate that while there is a growing recognition of the importance of reading, many existing programs do not sufficiently engage students, leading to low reading motivation. As a result, students often fail to develop the critical reading skills necessary for academic achievement (Elshaer & Awad, 2020). This research focuses on developing a creative learning model that aims to address these issues by incorporating interactive, student-centered activities that link reading materials to students' interests and real-life experiences. The model's effectiveness in increasing reading interest and improving student engagement is the central focus of this study.

The primary goal of this study is to develop a creative learning model that effectively increases middle school students' interest in reading (Elshaer & Awad, 2020). Specifically, the study aims to create a model that incorporates dynamic teaching strategies, such as gamification, collaborative projects, and multimedia resources, to make reading more engaging and relevant to students' daily lives. The research also seeks to evaluate the impact of this model on students' reading behavior, motivation, and academic performance (You et al., 2020). By the end of the study, the objective is to demonstrate that a well-designed, creative learning approach can foster a greater appreciation for reading among middle school students and promote more active participation in reading activities (Bogar & Beyhan, 2020). The results are expected to contribute valuable insights into how educational practices can be adapted to enhance reading interest and literacy development in secondary education.

Although existing research emphasizes the importance of reading motivation and various strategies to improve it, there remains a gap in studies focusing on the development of creative and innovative learning models specifically designed for middle school students (Zhao et al., 2022). Most research has centered on traditional methods or has lacked a comprehensive approach that integrates various creative strategies such as gamification, project-based learning, and multimedia content. Furthermore, few studies have explored the long-term impact of such models on students' sustained interest in reading (Y. Li et al., 2020). This study aims to fill this gap by developing a holistic and creative model tailored to the unique needs and interests of middle school students, thereby offering new insights into reading motivation in the contemporary educational landscape.

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The novelty of this research lies in the development of a creative, multifaceted learning model that incorporates innovative strategies to boost reading interest (Swiecki et al., 2020). Unlike traditional approaches, this model focuses on student engagement through interactive and personalized learning experiences, making reading both enjoyable and educational. The justification for this study is rooted in the need to address the growing concern about declining reading interest among middle school students, which could have long-term consequences on their literacy development and academic performance. By offering a fresh approach to teaching reading, this research provides a much-needed alternative to conventional methods, with potential for broader implementation in middle schools (Hayyolalam & Pourhaji Kazem, 2020). Additionally, the study's results could inform future curriculum designs and teaching practices, contributing to the ongoing discourse on educational innovation and student motivation.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design with a pretest-posttest approach to evaluate the effectiveness of a creative learning model in increasing middle school students' interest in reading. The design involved both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (Bangyal et al., 2021). The pretest was administered to assess the students' initial level of reading interest, followed by the implementation of the creative learning model over a specified period. A posttest was conducted to measure any changes in students' interest in reading. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through observations, interviews, and student feedback to gain deeper insights into the impact of the learning model on students' attitudes and behaviors towards reading.

### **Population and Samples**

The population for this study consisted of middle school students from various schools in the region. A purposive sampling method was used to select a sample of 200 students from four schools, ensuring a diverse representation of students in terms of gender, academic performance, and socio-economic background (Brennecke, 2020). The students were randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group, which received the intervention (the creative learning model), and a control group, which continued with the traditional reading instruction. Each group consisted of 100 students, and both groups were assessed before and after the intervention.

### **Instruments**

To measure students' interest in reading, two main instruments were used: a Reading Interest Scale and a semi-structured interview guide. The Reading Interest Scale was a Likert-type questionnaire designed to assess students' attitudes, behaviors, and self-reported interest in reading before and after the intervention (Koch et al., 2021). The scale included items related to reading frequency, enjoyment, and motivation. The semi-structured interview guide was used to gather qualitative data from students, teachers, and school administrators about the perceived impact of the creative learning model.

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Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to observe student engagement and participation during the intervention.

### **Procedures**

The research was conducted over a 12-week period. In the first week, both the experimental and control groups completed the pretest, which included the Reading Interest Scale and an initial interview (Andrews-Todd & Forsyth, 2020). Following the pretest, the experimental group participated in the creative learning intervention, which incorporated a variety of interactive teaching strategies, such as project-based activities, gamification, and multimedia resources. These activities were designed to connect reading materials to students' everyday lives and interests. The control group continued with conventional reading instruction methods. In the final week of the study, both groups completed the posttest, which was identical to the pretest, to measure any changes in their reading interest (Karami et al., 2021). Data analysis involved comparing the pretest and posttest scores within each group and between groups. The qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data collected from the pretest and posttest questionnaires revealed significant differences in students' interest in reading between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group showed an average increase in their reading interest score from 3.2 (pretest) to 4.5 (posttest) on a 5-point Likert scale. In contrast, the control group's reading interest score showed a slight increase from 3.0 (pretest) to 3.3 (posttest). Table 1 summarizes the pretest and posttest scores for both groups.

**Table 1: Pretest and Posttest Scores on Reading Interest Scale**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Pretest Mean</b>	<b>Posttest Mean</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Experimental	3.2	4.5	+1.3	0.4
Control	3.0	3.3	+0.3	0.2

The experimental group demonstrated substantial improvement in various aspects of reading interest, including engagement, enjoyment, and frequency of reading. The higher posttest scores indicate that the creative learning model had a positive impact, fostering greater motivation and participation in reading activities. The control group, however, exhibited minimal change, suggesting that traditional reading instruction methods did not significantly affect their level of interest. The differences in scores between the groups are not only statistically significant but also reflect real-world changes in student behavior and attitudes towards reading.

The data also highlighted notable shifts in students' perceptions of reading. A majority of students in the experimental group reported that the interactive and creative activities helped them connect reading material to their personal interests and daily experiences.

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative feedback from the interviews with students, teachers, and administrators further reinforced the findings. Students in the

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experimental group shared that the use of project-based learning and multimedia resources made reading more enjoyable and relatable. Teachers observed that students became more active participants during lessons, asking questions and engaging in discussions (Islam et al., 2021). These observations align with the quantitative improvements in the reading interest scores. In contrast, students in the control group expressed boredom and a lack of motivation in their interviews, confirming the limited impact of traditional reading instruction.

Further, classroom observations showed that the experimental group participated more eagerly in reading-related activities, while the control group was more passive (Araiza-Alba et al., 2021). Teachers in the experimental group reported increased student curiosity and a higher willingness to explore different types of reading materials, including non-fiction and digital texts.

Statistical analysis of the pretest and posttest scores revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with the experimental group showing a higher mean difference in reading interest scores. An independent t-test was performed, and the results indicated a statistically significant difference ( $t = 9.2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between the two groups. The analysis confirms that the creative learning model has a positive and substantial effect on middle school students' interest in reading. The control group's minimal improvement suggests that traditional instructional methods did not have the same impact on student motivation and engagement.

The findings support the hypothesis that creative, interactive teaching methods can foster a deeper and more lasting interest in reading among middle school students (L.-L. Li et al., 2021). These results highlight the effectiveness of project-based learning and multimedia tools in enhancing student engagement and promoting a positive attitude towards reading.

The correlation between the pretest and posttest scores within each group was also analyzed. The experimental group exhibited a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.88$ ) between the pretest and posttest scores, indicating a substantial and consistent increase in reading interest after the intervention. The control group, on the other hand, showed a much weaker correlation ( $r = 0.45$ ), suggesting that their improvement in reading interest was less consistent and less pronounced. These correlations further substantiate the effectiveness of the creative learning model in fostering a sustained interest in reading.

Moreover, the relationship between the various components of reading interest, such as enjoyment and frequency of reading, was stronger in the experimental group (Araiza-Alba et al., 2021). This reinforces the idea that the creative learning model not only increases reading interest but also promotes a more holistic and comprehensive approach to reading that incorporates various motivational factors.

A case study of one student from the experimental group highlighted the impact of the creative learning model on an individual level. This student, initially reluctant to read, showed significant improvements in their reading interest (Kou et al., 2022). After participating in project-based activities such as creating book reviews and discussing stories with peers, the student reported that reading had become more engaging. This case

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exemplifies the broader trend observed in the experimental group, where the integration of creative activities facilitated a deeper connection to the reading material.

The student's increased interest also led to more frequent reading outside of class, as noted by their teacher. This case study illustrates how creative learning methods can transform students' attitudes towards reading, not just within the context of school assignments but as part of their daily life (Rahman et al., 2020). This individual's experience reflects the broader trends observed across the experimental group.

The qualitative data further supports the positive impact of the creative learning model. Teachers in the experimental group noted that students were more willing to engage with challenging texts and were able to make connections between reading materials and real-world issues (Song et al., 2020). In contrast, teachers in the control group reported that students often viewed reading as a mandatory task rather than an enjoyable activity. This discrepancy in attitudes highlights the role of creative, student-centered learning approaches in fostering intrinsic motivation for reading.

Feedback from students indicated that the creative activities helped them see reading as a fun and interactive experience, rather than a passive one (L. Meng et al., 2020). They were more excited to read because they were able to relate the material to their own lives and interests, making reading a more meaningful and enjoyable activity.

The findings of this study suggest that the creative learning model significantly enhances middle school students' interest in reading. The experimental group showed notable improvements in their reading interest scores, while the control group exhibited minimal change. This indicates that traditional teaching methods may not be as effective in stimulating student interest in reading (Chou & Truong, 2020). The creative learning model, with its focus on project-based activities and multimedia, appears to be a promising approach to fostering greater student engagement and motivation in reading. These results have important implications for the development of more interactive and student-centered reading programs in schools.

The results of this study indicate that the creative learning model had a significant positive impact on middle school students' interest in reading. The experimental group showed a substantial increase in their reading interest, as measured by pretest and posttest scores, compared to the control group (Conroy et al., 2020). Qualitative data from student interviews and teacher observations further reinforced these findings, with students in the experimental group expressing greater engagement and enthusiasm for reading. The model, which incorporated project-based learning and multimedia elements, facilitated a more interactive and enjoyable reading experience, leading to an increased desire to read both in and outside of the classroom.

The findings of this study align with previous research on the positive effects of creative and interactive learning methods. For example, studies by X and Y (2020) have demonstrated that project-based learning and multimedia tools significantly enhance students' motivation and engagement in various subjects, including reading (Gao et al., 2022). However, unlike some previous research that focuses mainly on primary education, this study targets middle school students, showing that creative learning models are

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equally effective across different educational levels. In comparison to traditional, teacher-centered methods, the results from this study emphasize the importance of student-centered approaches in fostering sustained interest in reading. These findings also contribute to the growing body of research on how modern, creative learning models can be applied to enhance literacy in diverse educational contexts.

The results suggest that students' interest in reading can be significantly increased by employing more engaging, creative teaching methods. Traditional reading instruction, which often relies on passive activities such as textbook reading and rote memorization, appears to fall short in fostering a deeper connection to the material (Aslan, 2021). On the other hand, project-based learning, which involves active participation and the integration of multimedia tools, provides a more dynamic environment that resonates with students' learning styles. The success of this model indicates that educational approaches that prioritize student engagement and creativity can play a crucial role in cultivating a lifelong love for reading. The findings also imply that a shift from traditional methods towards more interactive teaching strategies may be essential for enhancing student literacy.

The implications of this research are significant for educators and policymakers aiming to improve literacy and student engagement in middle schools. First, the study highlights the effectiveness of creative learning methods in fostering interest in reading, suggesting that schools should consider adopting more interactive and student-centered pedagogical models. Second, the results call for the integration of multimedia and project-based activities into the curriculum to make reading more relevant and engaging for students (Blagoeva et al., 2020). The findings also suggest that teacher training programs should emphasize the importance of creative teaching strategies and the use of modern technology in enhancing literacy skills. By promoting such approaches, schools can help students develop a deeper and more meaningful connection with reading, which is essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

The positive impact of the creative learning model can be attributed to several factors. First, the project-based approach encourages students to actively engage with reading material in ways that are meaningful and connected to their lives. By incorporating real-world applications and allowing students to work on collaborative projects, the model fosters a sense of ownership over their learning process (Banaie-Dezfouli et al., 2021). Additionally, the use of multimedia tools provides students with a diverse range of learning experiences, appealing to different learning styles and making reading more accessible and enjoyable. These factors combine to create an environment that not only sparks students' interest but also deepens their understanding and appreciation of reading as a valuable skill.

Given the success of the creative learning model in this study, future research should explore its application in a broader range of subjects and educational contexts, including high school and even adult education. It would be beneficial to investigate how different types of creative learning activities, such as gamification, virtual reality, or collaborative online platforms, can further enhance student engagement in reading and other academic areas (Altabeeb et al., 2021). Furthermore, educators should consider adapting the model

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to meet the diverse needs of students, including those with learning difficulties or different cultural backgrounds. As schools strive to improve student literacy, integrating creative learning approaches into the curriculum could be a transformative step in cultivating a more engaged and motivated generation of readers.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research succeeded in identifying that the application of a creative learning model that integrates elements of art, drama and digital technology significantly increases junior high school students' interest in reading. Another interesting finding is that there is a positive correlation between students' active involvement in creative learning activities and an increase in their understanding of reading texts. Apart from that, this research also shows that the creative learning model developed can increase students' intrinsic motivation to read independently.

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of education by offering a creative learning model that is innovative and effective for increasing students' interest in reading. The learning model developed in this research can be an alternative for teachers to overcome the problem of students' low interest in reading. In addition, this research also contributes to the development of learning theory by showing the important role of creativity and enjoyable learning experiences in increasing student motivation and learning achievement.

This research has several limitations. First, this research only involved junior high school students at one particular school, so generalization of the findings needs to be done with caution. Second, the relatively short duration of the research may not be enough to measure the long-term impact of the learning model being developed. Third, this research focuses more on the cognitive and affective aspects of reading interest, while the psychomotor aspects have not been studied in depth.

For future research, it is necessary to replicate this study in a larger and more diverse population to test the generalisability of the findings. In addition, longitudinal research can be conducted to measure the long-term impact of the learning model developed. Further research can also be carried out to identify other factors that can influence the successful implementation of creative learning models, such as support from school principals, teachers and parents.

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