



THE IMPACT OF HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT ON THE THEME PREFERENCES IN THE NOVELS BY CHILD AUTHORS

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Abstract: Children are naturally fond of stories that integrate meaning and humor yet engagingly deliver life principles and concepts. Stories provide not only entertainment but also a means of learning about various habits, cultures, and arrays of human experiences. In recent years, a remarkable shift has occurred in which children, who were previously passive consumers of stories, have become active contributors as child authors. In Bandung, the capital city of West Java capital city, a national publisher has emerged as a facilitator for child authors, allowing them to publish their creative works. This platform has published 536 novels written by young minds over the last two decades under the brand Kecil-Kecil Punya Karya (KKPK). This paper seeks to investigate the theme and genre preferred by child authors for their novels and to what extent immediate social factors influence their writing and the topic preferences. This research may contribute valuable insights into the intersection of sociolinguistics, education, and societal influence by understanding the dynamics of child authorship. The results show that the themes preferred by the child authors are adventure and exploration, family and affection, friendship and mystery and problem-solving. Immediate environment; family and school play a tremendous role in introducing, nurturing and developing early literacy routine to child authors that lead to positive productive literacy culture.

Keywords: home literacy environment; theme preference; child authors; stories; reading; writing.

INTRODUCTION

Stories are parts of children's lives; be they read or being read by adults. Many children's stories are popular among children in Indonesia, such as stories written by H. C Andersen, A. A. Milne, Roald Dahl, Enid Blyton, and other authors. Folklore and legends are also popular readings amongst Indonesian children. Contemporary Indonesian literature also give nuance to their reading repertoire.

Home literacy environment plays a fundamental role in the reading development of children, particularly in the early years, and that its influence is significant children (Johnson at. al, 2024). Within the family, language choices vary based on parent-child relationships and inherently connected to parental roles on language preferences, and usage (Zuraida & Simatupang, 2023). Parental involvement, home literacy environment, socioeconomic status, and literary

resources are some of the factors that positively influence language acquisition (Mulenga &, Beatrice, 2024). Active home literacy environment enhance positive affective relationship between parents and children and improve children reading performance (Marta at. al, 2023). Smith & Anderson (2024) researched that peer influence and social interactions among children impact their reading interests.

Reading a variety of genres helps children acquire text structures and language that they can transfer to their writing. Reading provides children with prior knowledge that they can use in their stories. Recent research by Boyd & Markarian (2020) show that children's interactions with their peers and the school environment contribute to their literary development. Themes such as friendship, adventure, and school life are often reflected in children's writing due to their daily experiences in school settings. Reutzel & Clark

(2020) argue that teachers' use of specific reading instruction strategies affects students' reading interest and motivation. Luciana, et al. (2020) assert that the most recurrent reading practices linger in variety of reading material and reading practices indicated by the children, role of the child-reader within the family environment, children's perspective regarding genres and reading material. It was established that the children referred more to the reading material than to the genre, and this result is of higher significance in the planning of classroom literacy and reading practices, which are assessed by the end of the text. In line with Fisher (2021) asserts that societal contexts, specifically, family dynamics and educational settings, influence the themes and genres chosen by young authors. Children integrate their understanding of social issues into their writing often reflecting themes like family challenges, social justice, and community. Kucirkova (2022) researched how family storytelling traditions and media consumption shape children's preferences for specific narratives and themes in their creative writing. Children growing up in environments where stories are personalized or where media plays a significant role often incorporate similar personalization and media-driven themes in their stories. According to Victoria (2022), children's literature can serve as a platform for discussing complex socio-political themes, thus enriching children's understanding of the world around them. Highlights that stories contribute to understanding identity and socio-political issues, often serving as a medium for creativity and critical thinking.

Reading and writing are intertwined activities. Early reading experience has a tremendous role in shaping children writing skills. Bus & Neuman (2020) argue that book reading with caregivers promotes early literacy skills, which are foundational for children's writing development. Exposed to rich language and narrative structures during shared reading experiences, children enhanced their ability to structure their writing. Home and school literacy practices, impact children's writing skills (Barton, 2020). Smith & (2021) argue that early literacy interventions and their effect on children's writing skills. Sulzby & Teale (2021) assert that early storytelling and book-reading experiences contribute to children's writing development. Children engaging in storytelling and book reading at an early age demonstrate more advanced writing skills, particularly in narrative structure and vocabulary use. According to Treiman & Kessler (2021)

early reading experiences allow children learn to write words. Early literacy contribute to developing spelling and writing skills. While, Whitehurst & Lonigan (2022) demonstrates that early interventions aimed at improving reading skills also have a positive impact on children's writing abilities, particularly in terms of spelling, grammar, and composition. Moreover, research by Mulenga & Beatrice (2024) shows that the home literacy environment influenced children's oral language development. The study further sought to identify the factors within the home environment that supported development of oral language skills.

Writing and authorship are closely influenced by social factors. Karin, et al. (2022) state that children's authorship involves exploring precise language to invent stories, constructing themselves as subjects. It fosters imagination, memory, and cultural sharing, emphasizing the ethical-poetic dimension of narrative creation. Yingzi & Pingli (2023) who suggest that family literacy develop family education theories with Chinese characteristics; strengthen departmental collaboration, government leadership, and participation of the entire society; build a "children and adults" literacy community, develop intergenerational projects, and shift the focus from children to families. Children's authorship involves exploring precise language to invent stories, constructing themselves as subjects. It fosters imagination, memory, and cultural sharing, emphasizing the ethical-poetic dimension of narrative creation.

Social factors trigger literacy competence. Recent research highlights the significant influence of immediate social factors, such as family and school, on the topic preferences of child authors in their novels. Children's choices of themes and narratives are often shaped by their surroundings, including their interactions with family members and experiences at school. Hoffman & Paciga (2019) researched how classroom literacy activities, such as group discussions and book clubs, influence the themes children choose to explore in their writing. The research shows that children are likely to adopt themes related to cooperation, friendship, and moral dilemmas as a result of these activities. Aram & Aviram (2020) investigate the interactions with siblings and peers contribute to the development of children's writing skills and thematic choices. It reveals that children often reflect themes related to sibling rivalry, cooperation, and peer relationships in their stories, influenced by their real-life interactions. Martinez & Harmon (2020) researched on how family

literacy practices, including shared reading and storytelling, shape the thematic content of children's creative writing. The study finds that children from homes with strong literacy traditions tend to write about themes related to family, culture, and heritage. Bishop (2021) researched children's exposure diverse social contexts through family, community, and school environments shapes the themes they explore in their writing. Through collections of their reading children see themselves and their experiences reflected in the stories they read and write. Therefore, by considering the parental and caregiver interactions, home and school environment on children's cognitive, affective, and linguistic development, this research aims to seek answers of the topic preferred by child author for their novels and to what extent immediate social factors influence their topic preferences in their novels.

METHOD

This study adopted a mixed-method design of research, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to give both breadth and depth of understanding and evidence. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2021). In proportion to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2019) mixed research methods is employed to broaden and strengthen the conclusions drawn from the data. To gain nuanced insights into the thematic preference of child authors and their connection to sociolinguistic environments, gender, and age, this study adopts a qualitative research design. By employing in-depth content analysis, this research aims to explore the rich and context-specific aspects of young authors' experiences and creative decisions (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

The target population for this research comprises child authors aged between 8 and 15 when published. Purposive sampling is employed to 8 productive authors whose publications more than 4 novels. The total number of the novel is 45. The analysis will focus on identifying the gender of the authors, the themes, the genre of the novels, the immediate social factors influence their writing and theme preference. The data analysis phase will employ thematic analysis to uncover recurring themes and patterns in the content analysis of novels. A cross-case analysis will be conducted to compare and contrast thematic choices among different authors, shedding light on commonalities and variations related to theme and genre. Data presentation and reporting will involve narrative descriptions of key findings. Visual aids, such as thematic charts, will be used to enhance the clarity

and accessibility of the findings. The study will acknowledge its limitations, such as the potential for subjective interpretation inherent in qualitative research. In the conclusion, This research will summarize key findings and discuss the theme, genre and authors environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents in this study are prolific child authors, with a clear majority being female. Out of the 8 authors surveyed, 7 are female, while only 1 is male, indicating a significant gender disparity in this group. The dominance of female authors among the respondents may suggest a greater inclination or encouragement for creative expression among the authors.

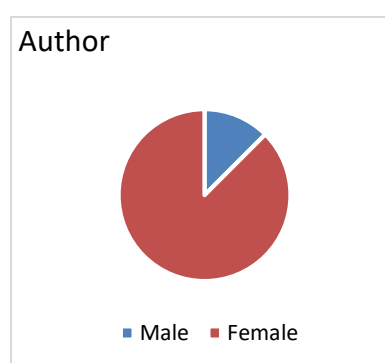


Figure 1. *Author sex*

This gender imbalance is a reflection of broader societal trends where girls are often encouraged to pursue literary and expressive arts and the availability of role models in literature that resonate more with female children. Additionally, the presence of only one male author might indicate potential barriers that boys face in engaging with or being recognized in the field of child authorship, such as societal expectations or differing interests.

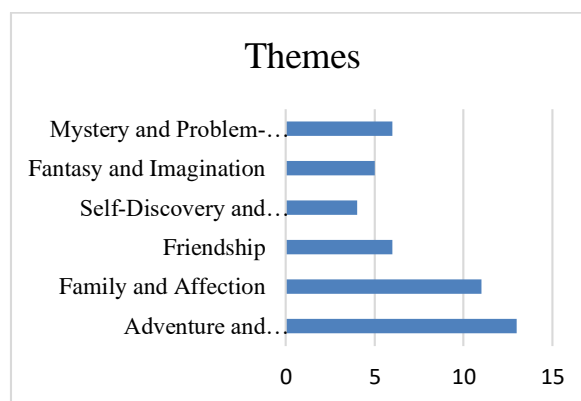


Figure 2. *Distributions of themes*

The themes identified in the works of the child authors are diverse, covering a wide-ranging of topics and ideas; adventure and exploration, family

and affection, friendship, self-discovery and personal growth, fantasy and imagination, mystery and problem-solving. The themes identified in the novels written by child authors are classified into six categories. This diversity may reflect the wide-ranging interests and experiences of the child authors, which could be influenced by their immediate environment; family, school, personal experiences, cultural backgrounds or the types of literature they are exposed to. Parental involvement, the values upheld at home, and the types of stories shared within the family contribute to the themes children choose to explore in their writing. For instance, a supportive and nurturing family environment might inspire themes of love, trust, and personal growth in their stories. On the other hand, exposure to family challenges or societal issues may lead children to explore more complex or darker themes. The breakdown of themes is as follows: (1) Adventure and exploration: 13 novels (28.9%) (2) Family and affection: 11 novels (24.4%) (3) Friendship: 6 novels (13.3%) (4) Self-discovery and personal growth: 4 novels (8.9%) (5) Fantasy and imagination: 5 novels (11.1%) (6) Mystery and problem-solving: 6 novels (13.3%)

Based on the 45 titles of the novels, we can infer several recurring themes and genres that characterize the novels written by these child authors. The themes can be categorized to six themes. Below is the detailed conclusion with elaboration of the themes:

Adventure and exploration. Titles like *"Powerful Girls," "Let's Go, Fatimah," "Si Juki dan Peti Ajaib," "Petualangan di Kota Terapung,"* and *"Petualangan di Hutan Hantu"* suggest a strong focus on adventure. These titles imply stories where the characters embark on thrilling journeys, face challenges, and discover new worlds, whether in real-life settings or fantasy realms.

Family and affection. Titles such as *"Kado Untuk Ummi," "Ibuku Chayank, Muach!," "Safe Secret Deposit Box," "Permen-Permen Cinta Untukmu," "Satu Hari Tanpa Bunda,"* and *"Pancake Untuk Bunda"* highlight the importance of family, particularly the bond between children and their mothers. These stories likely explore themes of love, care, and the significance of familial relationships.

Friendship. *"Kisah 3 Sahabat," "Kisah Persahabatan Fairy Twins," "Virtual Best Friend,"* and *"Kompetisi Detektif Cilik"* emphasize the theme of friendship. These titles suggest stories centered around the dynamics of friendship,

teamwork, and the challenges and joys of maintaining close bonds with peers.

Self-discovery and personal growth. Titles like *"2 of Me," "Introvert vs Ekstrovert,"* and *"Waktu Berhenti di Masa Depan"* indicate themes of self-discovery, identity, and personal growth. These novels likely delve into the inner worlds of the characters, exploring their struggles with identity, personality, and their place in the world.

Fantasy and imagination. Titles such as *"My Fantasy World," "Rahasia Hutan Ajaib," "Planet Aneh di Galaksi Biru,"* and *"Unicorn Party"* reflect a strong inclination towards fantasy and imaginative worlds. These novels probably transport readers to magical realms, filled with mythical creatures, enchanted forests, and extraordinary adventures.

Mystery and problem-solving. Titles like *"Misteri Denting Jam Tua," "Misteri Ruangan Tersembunyi,"* and *"Fake Account"* suggest mystery and detective elements. These stories likely revolve around uncovering secrets, solving puzzles, and addressing complex problems.

In terms of the genre, the 45 novel titles are identified to have several recurring genres that define the works of these child authors. The genre can be grouped into 4 distinct categories.

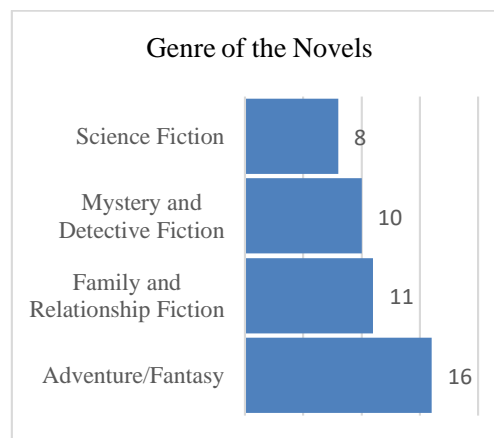


Figure 3. *Genre*

Here is a detailed conclusion with further elaboration:

Adventure/fantasy. A significant portion of the titles suggests that these novels belong to the adventure/fantasy fiction genre (25%), novels like, *Petualangan Nana Si Peri Kecil and Let's Go, Fatimah.* Characters often undertake quests, face obstacles, and embark on thrilling journeys, making this genre highly engaging for young readers. The prevalence of titles with fantastical elements, such as *"Planet Aneh di Galaksi Biru"* and *"My Fantasy World,"* points to a strong fantasy genre influence. This genre allows for creative

storytelling, where the limits of reality are pushed, and imagination takes center stage.

Family and Relationship Fiction. Titles focusing on family and relationships indicate that many of these novels fall within the family and relationship fiction genre. These stories explore the dynamics within families and between friends, emphasizing values like love, trust, and support.

Mystery and Detective Fiction. With titles like "*Kompetisi Detektif Cilik*" and "*Misteri Ruangan Tersembunyi*," it's clear that mystery and detective fiction is a favored genre among these child authors. These stories likely engage readers with suspenseful plots and the challenge of solving a mystery.

Science Fiction. Titles such as "*Waktu Berhenti di Masa Depan*" and "*Planet Aneh di Galaksi Biru*" suggest an interest in science fiction. This genre often explores futuristic concepts, technology, and otherworldly scenarios, providing a sense of wonder and exploration of the unknown.

Child authors show their favourable themes. #R1 tends to use adventure and exploration. She wrote 6 novels in this theme. #R2 chooses family and affection, with 4 novels. #R3 prefer to write about friendship and adventure and exploration with 2 novels each. #R4 focuses more on writing about fantasy and imagination, with 3 novels. #R5 wrote 2 novels with the theme adventure and exploration and science fiction. #R6 writes 3 novels about mystery and problem-solving and family and affection, with 3 novels each. #R8 focuses more on adventure and exploration, with 4 novels. Finally, #R8 is fond of writing about mystery and detective fiction by writing 3 novels.



Figure 5. Favourable themes by the child authors

These titles reflect the diverse and imaginative nature of children's literature, with a strong emphasis on adventure, fantasy, and the exploration of relationships, both familial and social. The child authors seem to draw upon their creativity and curiosity, producing stories that not

only entertain but also explore deeper themes of identity, growth, and the importance of bonds with others. This variety in themes and genres display the richness of young authors' perspectives and their ability to engage readers with relatable and fantastical elements alike.

CONCLUSION

In analyzing the novels written by child authors, it is evident that adventure and exploration is the most popular theme, accounting for 28.9% of the novels. The adventure/fantasy genre dominates with 35.6%. This analysis suggests that child authors are inclined towards imaginative and explorative storytelling, with a strong focus on adventure and family relationships.

Parental involvement, the values upheld at home, and the types of stories shared within the family contribute to the themes children choose to explore in their writing. For instance, a supportive and nurturing family environment might inspire themes of love, trust, and personal growth in a child's stories. On the other hand, exposure to family challenges or societal issues may lead children to explore more complex or darker themes.

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