JIPI (Jurnal Ilmu Perpustakaan dan Informasi) Vol. 11 No. 2 Tahun 2026
ISSN (online): 2528-021X
Page: 471-482

ISSUES CONCERNING STUDENTS' INTEREST IN VISITING THE LIBRARY AT MA NURUL ISLAM AIR BAKOMAN

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Receive : 15 Sep 2026
Accepted : 16 Oct 2026
Published: 03 Nov 2026
DOI : 10.30829/jipi.v10i2.31819

Abstract
School libraries serve as learning resource centers that support academic activities and the development of students' literacy. However, the utilization of the MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library, Pulau Panggung District, Tanggamus Regency, remains suboptimal, as indicated by students' low interest in visiting the library. This study aims to analyze the internal and external factors contributing to students' low library visitation interest and to examine the influence of internet use as an alternative source of information. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Nine informants participated in the study, consisting of eight students and one library manager selected purposively. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that students' interest in visiting the library remains relatively low, as reflected in the absence of a consistent habit of using the library and the tendency to visit only when specific academic needs arise. Internal factors include reading habits, motivation, information needs, and students' perceptions of the benefits of the library. External factors are related to limited facilities, the comfort of the library space, and collections that are not yet fully relevant to students' information needs. These conditions encourage some students to use the internet as an alternative means of obtaining information more easily and quickly. The findings confirm that low library visitation interest is not solely related to students' willingness, but is also influenced by library conditions and changing patterns of information seeking in the digital era.

Keywords: Causal Factors; Library Visitation Interest; School Library; Students; Library Utilization

INTRODUCTION

School libraries are educational facilities that function as learning resource centers for students. They provide library materials and information services that support learning

activities, fulfillment of information needs, expansion of knowledge, and the development of reading habits. Usholicchah et al. (2024) explain that school libraries serve as learning resource centers through the provision of library materials and information services that support educational activities. The effective utilization of these functions is determined not only by the availability of the library itself but also by students' interest in visiting and making use of the resources provided.

Library visitation interest is an important indicator of school library utilization. Darmono explains that visitation interest refers to an individual tendency that encourages a person to visit and use a library. Among students, this interest may be reflected in the desire to read, seek information, obtain reference materials, complete assignments, and use the library as a learning space. Such interest develops through factors originating within the students themselves as well as through conditions within the library environment. Maharani (2022) shows that library visitation interest is associated with internal factors, such as curiosity, previous visiting experiences, and the desire to gain knowledge, as well as external factors, including information needs, library collections, services, internet access, and the comfort of available facilities.

The condition of the library also plays an important role in shaping students' interest in visiting. Collections that are relevant to students' learning needs and interests may increase the attractiveness of the library. Comfortable facilities and spatial arrangements can create positive experiences during library visits, while responsive services can facilitate students' access to information. Literacy activities and library promotion may also introduce students to available collections and services. Gumelar and Saroya (2022) demonstrated a relationship between library spatial design and students' visitation interest. Fitrianto et al. (2022) similarly found that interior design and book collections were associated with readers' interest in visiting libraries. Trihandayani and Sudiar (2022) identified library promotion as one strategy for increasing users' interest in library services.

Developing the library as a learning space is therefore an important component of efforts to increase student engagement. A school library should not function merely as a place for storing and borrowing books. Comfortable learning spaces, literacy activities, supporting facilities, and services that respond to students' needs can strengthen the library's role within the learning process. Ralph and Hegeman (2025) showed that transforming school libraries into *learning commons* can enhance student engagement in learning experiences. This suggests that library utilization is closely connected to broader educational functions.

These issues are relevant to the situation at the MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library in Pulau Panggung District, Tanggamus Regency. Based on preliminary observations conducted in 2025, the school had 181 students. Of these, 54 students, or approximately 30%, were recorded as visiting and using the library, while 127 students, or approximately 70%, had not actively utilized library services. This proportion indicates a gap between the existence of the library as a learning resource facility and the extent to which it is actually used by students.

However, the number of visits alone does not explain the reasons for the low level of library utilization. The situation requires an analysis of factors associated with students' visitation interest. Internal factors include motivation, reading habits, information needs, curiosity, and perceptions of the benefits of the library. External factors include the quality and relevance of collections, facilities, spatial arrangements, services, literacy activities, and efforts to introduce library services to students. Examining both groups of factors is necessary so that the problem of low visitation interest is not understood solely on the basis of visitor statistics.

Previous studies have examined library visitation interest from various perspectives. Maharani (2022) identified internal and external factors associated with visitation interest. Gumelar and Saroya (2022) emphasized the role of spatial design, while Fitrianto et al. (2022) examined the relationship between interior design, book collections, and visitation interest. Trihandayani and Sudiar (2022) investigated library promotion as an effort to increase user interest. These studies demonstrate that library visitation interest is influenced by multiple factors rather than by a single aspect.

Nevertheless, previous studies remain limited in explaining students' visitation interest within the context of a madrasah where library utilization is relatively low. Several earlier studies have focused primarily on specific aspects such as spatial arrangement, collections, interior design, or promotion. Such approaches have not yet provided a comprehensive understanding of how internal and external factors interact in explaining students' low visitation interest at the research site. Differences in school characteristics, library conditions, student needs, and learning environments may also produce different contributing factors.

The research gap addressed in this study lies in the need to obtain empirical evidence concerning the internal and external factors associated with students' low visitation interest at the MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library. The study is grounded primarily in the concept of library visitation interest. Internal and external factors are used as analytical dimensions to explain students' interest in visiting and utilizing the library. This approach is expected to provide a more focused analysis without extending the discussion to theories of information-seeking behavior or models of library utilization that are beyond the primary scope of the study.

Low visitation interest requires attention because it may reduce the utilization of the library as a learning resource center. Preliminary data indicate that the majority of students have not actively used the library. This condition provides the basis for systematically identifying the factors associated with low visitation interest. The findings may provide useful information for school administrators and library managers in determining priorities for improvement based on students' actual conditions and needs.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the factors contributing to students' low visitation interest at the MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library, Pulau Panggung District, Tanggamus Regency. The analysis focuses on internal and external factors associated with students' interest in visiting the library. The findings are expected to provide a basis for improving collections, facilities, services, spatial arrangements, and literacy activities in accordance with students' needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. The method was selected because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the factors contributing to students' low interest in visiting the library based on actual conditions in the field. A case study approach was used because the research focused on a single setting, namely the MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library. Information regarding students' experiences, perceptions, and patterns of library utilization was explored comprehensively through informants who had relevant experience or knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative research enables researchers to understand a phenomenon based on information obtained directly from individuals who experience or are familiar with it (Ardiansyah et al.,

2023). Darmono's concept of library visitation interest was used as the conceptual basis for identifying students' interest, motivation, and utilization of the library.

The study was conducted at MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman, Jalan Raya Airbakoman, Pulau Panggung District, Tanggamus Regency, Lampung, from August 1 to 20, 2026. The research site was selected based on preliminary observations indicating a low level of library utilization among students. Research participants were selected purposively according to the relevance of their experiences and knowledge to the focus of the study. Informants were not selected through statistical calculation, but rather based on their ability to provide relevant and in-depth information.

The study involved nine informants, consisting of eight students and one library manager. The eight students were selected by considering variations in grade level, gender, and intensity of library use. The distribution of informants included students from Grades X, XI, and XII, comprising four male and four female students, as well as students with high, moderate, and low levels of library visitation. These variations were intended to capture different experiences and perspectives concerning library visitation interest and utilization. Students with high visitation intensity were selected to provide information about their experiences in using the library. Those with moderate visitation intensity provided information regarding irregular patterns of library use, while students with low visitation intensity provided insights into the reasons for limited visits and the factors constraining library utilization. The library manager was selected because of their knowledge of the library's collections, facilities, services, visitation patterns, and overall management.

The selection of eight students also took into account the adequacy of the information obtained. Interviews were conducted progressively, with information compared across informants throughout the data collection process. Data collection was discontinued when the information began to show recurring patterns, no substantively new themes emerged, and the informants' responses provided sufficient explanation of the research focus. This condition indicated that information adequacy, or *data saturation*, had been reached. Accordingly, the total number of nine informants was determined on the basis of the adequacy and depth of the information obtained rather than through statistical considerations.

The study used both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through observations and interviews with students and the library manager. Secondary data were obtained from library documents, student visitation records, the school profile, archives, and other written sources relevant to the study. These secondary data were used to complement and strengthen the information obtained from the primary data (Fadila et al., 2025).

Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations focused on the condition of the library space, student activities, facilities, collections, services, and visitation patterns. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore students' experiences, reasons, motivations, and perceptions regarding library utilization. The questions addressed internal factors, including motivation, reading interest, information-seeking habits, and perceptions of the benefits of the library. External factors included collections, facilities, comfort, services, and school support. Interviews with the library manager focused on the condition of the collections, facilities, services, visitation patterns, and efforts to increase students' interest in visiting the library. Documentation was used to obtain visitation data, photographs of library conditions, and other supporting materials. The use of these three techniques generated complementary forms of data (Fadila et al., 2025).

Data analysis was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the study. Data reduction involved selecting, summarizing, and categorizing information according to the research focus. The data were grouped into internal and external factors associated with students' visitation interest. Internal factors included motivation, reading interest, information-seeking habits, and perceptions of the library. External factors included collections, facilities, comfort, services, and school support. Data were presented narratively according to the themes identified during the analysis. Conclusions were drawn by identifying the principal factors associated with students' low interest in visiting the library. The analytical stages consisted of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Maharani, 2022).

The trustworthiness of the data was examined through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from students with information provided by the library manager. Methodological triangulation involved comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. These comparisons were used to assess the consistency of information concerning library conditions and the factors associated with students' low visitation interest. Triangulation was employed to strengthen the credibility of the research findings and to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Student Characteristics and General Patterns of Library Utilization

The study involved nine informants, consisting of eight students and one library manager. The students provided information regarding their visiting experiences, information needs, reading habits, use of library collections, perceptions of available facilities, and reasons for using or avoiding the library. The library manager provided information concerning the condition of the collections, facilities, services, and patterns of student visits.

MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman has 181 students, consisting of 91 male students (50.28%) and 90 female students (49.72%). These figures indicate a relatively balanced composition of potential library users. Observations showed that the existence of the library had not yet resulted in a routine pattern of utilization. Visits tended to occur when students had specific academic needs, particularly when searching for books or completing assignments.

These findings indicate that library use remains instrumental and situational. Students tend to use the library when they have specific information needs, while it has not yet developed into a learning space that they choose to use routinely. This condition is important because the success of a school library cannot be assessed solely on the basis of the number of visits. Frequency of use, purposes of utilization, continuity of interaction, and student engagement in learning activities should also be considered.

This finding is consistent with Ralph and Hegeman (2025), who demonstrate that student engagement with school libraries can be understood through a combination of visitation activities and the use of library resources. Following the transformation of a school library into a learning commons, increased library engagement was associated with a decline in the number of course failures. Accordingly, the low level of library visitation at MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman is more appropriately understood as an issue of student engagement with the library rather than merely as a matter of the number of students who visit.

> *"I usually go to the library when I have an assignment from a teacher and need a book. If I do not have an assignment, I usually stay in the classroom or use my mobile phone to search for information."*

This response indicates that students' visits remain situational and are closely associated with particular academic needs. The library has not yet become a primary choice as a learning space in students' everyday activities.

Condition of Collections, Facilities, and the Learning Environment

The library collection emerged from both observations and interviews as one of the strongest factors associated with students' low visitation interest. Fundamentally, the library serves as a provider of information resources that support learning processes, knowledge development, and students' literacy activities. The availability of adequate, diverse, relevant, and user-oriented collections is therefore an important element in creating a library that can attract students to visit.

Regulation of the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4 of 2024 concerning National Standards for School/Madrasah Libraries stipulates that libraries at the senior secondary school/madrasah level should provide sufficient compulsory textbooks to serve students and educators, with a minimum collection of 1,000 titles. Enrichment materials should consist of 70% nonfiction and 30% fiction.

Based on the findings at MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman, the library contained 400 book titles at the time of the study. This number remains below the minimum standard of 1,000 titles. There is therefore a shortage of at least 600 titles, meaning that the available collection represents only approximately 40% of the minimum requirement. Quantitatively, this condition indicates that the MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library has not yet met the required collection standard for senior secondary school/madrasah libraries. However, the analysis does not stop at the number of books available. A more important question concerns whether the existing collection is relevant, up to date, sufficiently diverse, and actually used by students.

The findings show that students do not always find the materials they need when visiting the library. This situation means that the library's function as an information resource has not yet fully met users' needs.

> *"Not all of the books I look for are available. For certain subjects, there are usually some books, but when I look for more specific books or additional materials, I sometimes cannot find them, so I usually search on the internet."* (Student 2, interview, August 2026)

This finding indicates that limitations in the collection have two dimensions. The first is availability, referring to whether the required materials are present. The second is usability, referring to whether the available materials are relevant to students' learning needs and interests. Increasing the number of books without considering these two aspects may improve the collection quantitatively from an administrative perspective without necessarily increasing its actual use.

Collection development should therefore consider four main indicators: relevance, currency, diversity, and circulation levels. Frequently borrowed materials indicate actual user demand. Conversely, materials that are available but rarely used should be evaluated in terms of content relevance, physical condition, currency of information, and attractiveness to students.

The perspective of *information behavior* further strengthens this interpretation. Students do not select information sources randomly. Rather, they tend to choose sources based on ease of access, the ability of the source to satisfy their information needs, and the amount of time required to obtain the information. When the library does not provide the information required, students may shift their searches to the internet or other information sources.

These findings demonstrate that the primary problem concerning the library collection is not merely an insufficient number of books, but also a mismatch between the resources available and students' information needs. Collection development strategies should therefore be based on user-needs analysis, circulation data, subject requirements, student requests, and developments in digital information resources.

Facilities encompass the infrastructure, furniture, equipment, and library resources provided by library managers to facilitate users' access to information and support librarians in managing library activities. Observations and interviews indicate that facilities constitute another factor influencing students' experiences in the library. Relevant aspects include tables, chairs, bookshelves, lighting, cleanliness, air circulation, and spatial arrangement.

> *"The room can be used for reading, but I think it still needs to be made more comfortable. If there were more comfortable seating and a more attractive atmosphere, I might visit more often."* (Student 3, interview, August 2026)

Facilities do not merely function as physical resources; they also shape students' learning experiences. Students who visit the library to read, discuss, or complete assignments require a space that supports both concentration and interaction. Therefore, the mere availability of tables and chairs does not necessarily indicate that the library has become an effective learning environment. This interpretation is consistent with research on library environments and *learning engagement*. Zheng et al. (2024) show that the library environment is associated with interaction and student engagement in learning. Studies on *learning commons* similarly demonstrate that spatial designs that support interaction can increase the use of library resources and collaborative learning activities.

In the context of MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman, these findings suggest that improvements to library facilities should focus on the functionality of the learning space rather than merely on adding physical resources. Spatial arrangements should accommodate individual reading, assignment completion, information seeking, and learning interactions. In this way, the library can gradually shift from functioning primarily as a book-storage space toward becoming an active learning environment.

Students' Internal and External Factors

The findings indicate that students' low interest in visiting the library is shaped by the interaction between internal student-related factors and external library conditions. Internal factors include reading habits, information needs, learning motivation, and students' perceptions of the benefits of the library. External factors are associated with the collection, facilities, comfort, services, literacy activities, school support, and the availability of digital information sources.

> *"Sometimes, when I need a book, I still do not often do my assignments in the library because I usually work on them in the classroom or at home."* (Student 4, interview, August 2026)

This finding suggests that low visitation interest should not be understood solely as a problem of student motivation. Reading habits do influence students' tendency to use the library; however, the development of such habits also requires a supportive environment. Students are more likely to establish regular library-use habits when attractive materials are available, the space is comfortable, information is easy to access, and activities provide meaningful reasons to visit.

This pattern demonstrates a reciprocal relationship between interest and environment. Students' interest may encourage library visits, while their experiences during library use can either strengthen or weaken that interest. If students repeatedly encounter situations in which the materials they need are unavailable or the physical environment does not adequately support learning, the likelihood of future visits may decrease.

These findings are also relevant to the study by Merga and Mat Roni (2025). Their international research indicates that access to school libraries, students' freedom to choose reading materials, and support from the school environment are important components in developing *reading engagement*. Accordingly, efforts to increase visitation interest should be understood as a process of creating meaningful and valuable library experiences for students.

Technology Use, Services, and Library Transformation

Internet use emerged as an important characteristic of students' information-seeking behavior. Interview findings indicate that students use mobile phones and the internet when they need information quickly. This does not necessarily mean that technology directly causes students to abandon the library. Rather, technology is better understood as part of a changing information environment that influences how students locate, evaluate, and select information sources.

> *"I use the internet more often than I go directly to the library because information on the internet is easy to find and can be accessed anywhere and at any time. I usually check the website or the source, and if the information is similar across several other websites, I feel more confident about it. However, I have never received specific guidance from the library on how to verify whether a source is reliable."* (Student 5, interview, August 2026)

This shift changes the role of the library. It is no longer sufficient for the library merely to provide access to printed books. Students also need support in identifying credible sources, evaluating information, comparing sources, and using information ethically.

Merga and Mat Roni (2025) identify *digital information literacy* as an important competency for students navigating online information environments. Their study shows that the development of digital information literacy has not yet become an equally prioritized area across all schools. Oddone and Garrison (2024) likewise emphasize the role of school librarians in developing students' information literacy skills within an increasingly dynamic information environment.

The findings of this study imply that the MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library needs to move toward a hybrid library model. Printed collections should continue to be maintained as learning resources, while digital resources can be expanded through electronic catalogs, e-books, repositories, online learning resources, and access to databases that are appropriate to students' needs.

Such transformation should not be limited to the provision of technological devices. Students' ability to assess the quality of information is more important. The library can develop activities that teach students how to formulate information needs, select appropriate keywords, compare sources, assess credibility, identify misleading information, and use information ethically.

The findings of Adeyemo (2026) further support this direction. Research on digital school libraries shows that the use of digital resources can strengthen information literacy skills, particularly the ability to identify credible sources, evaluate the relevance of information, and conduct independent research. The major challenges identified in that study were related to internet access and limited training.

Accordingly, the internet should not be positioned as a competitor to the library. Rather, it should be understood as part of an information ecosystem that the library needs to manage through the strengthening of digital literacy.

Library services refer to the processes through which library staff provide, organize, and facilitate access to facilities, collections, and information so that users can meet their information needs easily, quickly, and satisfactorily. The findings indicate that librarian services were not the most dominant factor contributing to students' low visitation interest. The library manager continued to provide assistance when students visited and required library materials.

> *"When I come to the library and want to look for a book, the library manager helps me. The service is quite good. I usually only come when I really need a book."* (Student 6, interview, August 2026)

This finding is important because it suggests that improvement strategies should not position service quality as the primary problem. Instead, services should be understood as an element that can strengthen the overall user experience.

The role of the library manager can be expanded beyond handling borrowing transactions toward the provision of information-needs-based services. Such services may include book recommendations, assistance with information searching, introductions to newly acquired collections, guidance in locating digital resources, and mechanisms for collecting students' requests for new materials.

This shift is consistent with the evolving role of school libraries. Modern library services are not limited to lending transactions but increasingly focus on helping students become more independent and competent information users.

Library transformation refers to a fundamental shift from conventional library systems toward systems that integrate digital technologies and more active learning functions. The findings indicate that the problem of low visitation interest cannot be addressed merely by increasing the number of books or improving physical facilities separately. Collections, space, information behavior, technology, services, and learning activities need to be understood as components of an interconnected ecosystem.

The concept of *learning commons* provides a more relevant framework for interpreting this condition. A *learning commons* positions the library as a learning environment that integrates information resources, technology, social interaction, learning activities, and support for students' needs. Ralph and Hegeman (2025) found that transforming a school library into a *learning commons* was followed by increased engagement in library use and was positively associated with academic outcomes.

This concept does not imply that MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman must immediately undertake major physical renovations. Transformation can begin through changes in function. The library can provide spaces for individual reading, simple discussion areas, information-search activities, introductions to digital resources, and literacy activities integrated into classroom learning.

Library transformation should also retain the role of printed collections. A more appropriate model is a hybrid library that combines print and digital resources. This model allows students to access sources according to their needs while receiving guidance in evaluating the quality of information.

Literacy activities should likewise move beyond passive reading toward the development of *information literacy* and *digital literacy*. Students can be trained to search for information, evaluate source credibility, compare print and digital information, construct references, and use information responsibly. Hossain et al. (2024) show that schools need to strengthen literacy related to the responsible use and management of information, including academic integrity and copyright awareness.

With this approach, library success should no longer be assessed solely through increases in the number of visits. More substantive indicators include increased use of collections, greater diversity of information sources used, student engagement in learning activities, improved ability to search for and evaluate information, and sustained library use over time.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings concerning students' interest in visiting the library at MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman, it can be concluded that students' visitation interest remains relatively low. This condition is indicated by the absence of a well-established habit of using the library routinely as part of students' learning activities. Library visits tend to be situational, particularly when students need books or information sources to complete academic assignments. Internal factors associated with this condition include reading habits, motivation, information needs, and students' perceptions of the benefits of the library.

External factors also contribute to students' low visitation interest. The main issues are related to the condition of facilities, the comfort of the library environment, and the characteristics of the collection, which have not yet fully met students' needs. Problems concerning the collection are not limited to quantity but also involve relevance, currency, diversity, and suitability for learning needs. These conditions encourage some students to choose alternative information sources that are easier to access, particularly the internet through digital devices.

Changes in students' information-seeking patterns indicate that low visitation interest cannot be understood solely as a lack of willingness to visit the library. The library is facing changes in students' information behavior, as they have become increasingly accustomed to obtaining information quickly through digital sources. This situation requires the library not only to maintain its function as a provider of printed materials but also to develop its role as a learning space, information center, and facilitator of digital and information literacy.

Students' visitation interest is shaped by the interaction between student characteristics and the library environment. Information needs may encourage students to visit the library, but their experiences with the collection, facilities, comfort, services, and ease of obtaining

information determine the sustainability of library use. The MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman Library has considerable potential, with 181 students as prospective users; however, this potential has not yet been fully translated into active student engagement with the library.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, the school is encouraged to improve the quality of the library by developing collections that are relevant, diverse, and aligned with students' learning needs and interests. Improvements to library facilities and the comfort of the physical environment should also be undertaken gradually to better support reading, assignment completion, and independent learning. In addition, the library manager is encouraged to develop information literacy activities, collection promotion, and the use of digital resources to help students access and evaluate information appropriately. Teachers are also expected to integrate library use into learning activities so that students' visits are not limited to completing assignments but instead become part of their regular learning habits. Furthermore, periodic evaluation should be conducted through the systematic recording of visitation data, collection use, and student feedback in order to assess the effectiveness of the improvements implemented.

Future studies may involve a more diverse range of informants, expand the research to additional locations, and examine more deeply the relationships among library facilities, collection availability, reading habits, technology use, and students' visitation interest. Such research is expected to provide a broader understanding and serve as a basis for formulating more appropriate strategies to increase students' interest in visiting school libraries.

THANK YOU-NOTE

The researchers would like to express their gratitude to MA Nurul Islam Airbakoman, Pulau Panggung District, Tanggamus Regency, as well as to the library manager, students, teachers, and all parties who provided permission, information, and support throughout the research process until the completion of this study.

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