

Research Paper

Impact of Incentives on Promoting Primary School Students' Reading Motivation in the NILAM Programme

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Abstract: The *Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca* (NILAM) programme has been implemented by the Malaysian Ministry of Education since 1999 with the objective of fostering a lifelong reading habit among students. However, the programme has been widely criticised for failing to cultivate students' reading motivation. Teachers play a major role in encouraging students to read more, and one method they can use to foster students' reading motivation involves the use of incentives. This study aimed to examine the impact of incentives used by teachers to promote primary school students' reading motivation in the NILAM programme. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study conducted interviews with 12 teachers from a national primary school in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The research findings found that the teachers used rewards and recognition as incentives to encourage their students to read. Most teachers viewed that incentives were effective in promoting their students' reading motivation. The analysis reveals that parental involvement and various forms of positive reinforcement could enhance the impact of incentives in promoting reading motivation. This study also provides insights into how to make the NILAM programme more meaningful and engaging for students.

Keywords: NILAM programme, reading motivation, incentives

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Introduction

Touted as a necessary life skill, reading helps students expand their vocabulary and knowledge, improve reading comprehension and writing skills, and elevate their confidence in speaking (Arsad & Janan, 2022; Hon & Mukundan, 2023; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023). The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) reported that the literacy rate of Malaysia was 94.64% in 2021 (Periasamy, 2024; Suhaidi, 2023). Although it is a high percentage, the country is suffering from a declining literacy rate of 2.74% from 2010 to 2021, and a 0.4% drop was reported in 2021 (Koshy, 2024; Suhaidi, 2023). Moreover, it was found that literate Malaysians generally lack reading interest (A. Ghani et al., 2021; Muhamad et al., 2020; Peter, 2023). Despite the data from the National Library of Malaysia (PNM) showing an increased reading rate per year among Malaysians, with 20 books in 2024 as compared to 15 in 2014, the ideal rate of 30 per year has yet to be achieved (Suhaidi, 2023). In fact, most students need to be told by their teachers to read, and they only read if it is important for homework and examination (Jalel et al., 2023).

Malaysians' poor reading habits have resulted in the decline of reading literacy and proficiency among students (Rajaendram, 2023). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 revealed that the reading literacy of 15-year-old Malaysian students has fallen from 415 to 388 points (Gopal et al., 2022; Periasamy, 2024; Rajaendram, 2023). This raises concern about the poor language proficiency and higher-order thinking skills among Malaysian students (Gopal et al., 2022; Periasamy, 2024). To cultivate a reading habit among students, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) has implemented the NILAM programme, which is short for "*Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca*" (Reading as the Pulse of Knowledge) (Arsad & Janan, 2022; Gopal et al., 2022; Jalel et al., 2023; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Taib et al., 2022). Under this programme, students are tasked with documenting the books they have read, and they will receive awards based on the number of read books (Taib et al., 2022). In 2019, reforms were carried out to increase the reading quality students will gain from the NILAM programme (Arsad & Janan, 2022; Ponnudorai & Zamin, 2022; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023).

Under the NILAM programme, teachers employ various methods to motivate students to read. The most notable method involves the usage of incentives, where teachers offer external rewards such as prizes, awards, and recognition for students who read many books (Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Taib et al., 2022). The more books they read, the more valuable the awards they will receive. Teachers also use incentives to encourage students to participate in the post-reading activities under the NILAM programme, with different rewards offered for different types of activities (Ponnudorai & Zamin, 2022; Taib et al., 2022).

Despite these efforts, the NILAM programme failed to develop a notable reading habit among students (A. Ghani et al., 2021; Taib et al., 2022). Three studies on

the NILAM programme have identified the lack of reading motivation as the main reason why students have a poor reading habit (A. Ghani et al., 2021; Muhamad et al., 2020; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023). Two other studies on reading motivation have proven that a higher reading interest leads to better academic performance (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Manuas et al., 2022). Similarly, another two studies have also identified intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as the two main categories of reading motivation used by teachers to promote a reading habit among students (Indrayadi, 2021; Manuas et al., 2022).

A number of studies on the NILAM programme mainly focused on the factors causing poor reading habits among students (Adnan et al., 2023; A. Ghani et al., 2021) and the ineffective implementation of the programme (Arsad & Janan, 2022; A. Ghani et al., 2021; Gopal et al., 2022; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Taib et al., 2022). Since reading increases language proficiency and reading motivation (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Muhamad et al., 2020), the NILAM programme has included post-reading activities which offers incentives to encourage students to read more (Ponnudurai & Zamin, 2022; Taib et al., 2022). Rahman and Mohamad (2023) also proposed that teachers can provide incentives to inspire students to read, which suggests that incentives can have a positive effect on students' reading motivation. Apart from incentives such as certificates, trophies, and cash prizes (Chua, 2022; Taib et al., 2022), there is insufficient information on the types of incentives used by teachers in schools. In addition, there is a lack of research on how these incentives have impacted students' reading motivation and what improvements can be done to enhance their impact in promoting their reading motivation. Thus, this research is guided by the following questions to fill these gaps:

1. What types of incentives do teachers use to promote primary students' reading motivation in the NILAM programme?
2. How does the use of incentives by teachers impact primary students' reading motivation in the NILAM programme?
3. What can be done to enhance the impacts of the incentives used by teachers on primary school students' reading motivation in the NILAM programme?

Literature Review

Development of the NILAM Programme in Malaysian Schools

The NILAM programme, which is short for "*Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca*" or "Reading as the Pulse of Knowledge" in English, was started by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1999 as an extensive reading programme for both primary and secondary school students, whose ages ranged between 7 and 17 years old (Taib et al., 2022). The purpose of the NILAM programme is to foster a lifelong reading habit among students, which is ascertained from the number of English and

Malay books read by the students (Arsad & Janan, 2022; Gopal et al., 2022; Jalel et al., 2023; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Taib et al., 2022). A NILAM programme record book is given to every student to list down the details of the books they have read, such as book title, author, publisher, and summary (Rosdi, 2023; Taib et al., 2022). These records are later verified by teachers who teach the English and Malay languages (Muhamad et al., 2020; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Taib et al., 2022).

Although the NILAM programme has been running for more than two decades, its effectiveness has been called to question by various parties who used the PISA 2022 scores as evidence of lowering of reading literacy rates among students due to poor reading habits (Gopal et al., 2022; Periasamy, 2024; Rajaendram, 2023). According to A. Ghani et al. (2021), interviews with school headmasters, teachers, and parents revealed various factors that caused students' poor reading habits. These included a lack of reading awareness, disruptive environment, technology, time constraints, lack of parental support, poor facilities, and uninteresting reading content. These findings were consistent with that of a 2017 Educational Technology Division survey (Gopal et al., 2022). Moreover, the time constraint factor was confirmed by a narrative inquiry conducted by Taib et al. (2022), where teachers explained that students were more invested in academics than the NILAM programme. In addition, the teachers' busy work schedules made it harder for them to cultivate their students' reading habits. According to Gopal et al. (2022), students were so busy with their academics that they kept their involvement in the NILAM programme to the minimum. Some also fabricated book summaries or copied them from other students' NILAM record books to give teachers the impression that they have good reading habits.

The NILAM programme failed to change students' negative perception of reading as a boring and uninspiring activity (A. Ghani et al., 2021; Jalel et al., 2023). With quality education being emphasised in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the NILAM programme underwent multiple reforms in 2019 to increase reading quality among students (Jalel et al., 2023; Ponnudurai & Zamin, 2022; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023). The first reform greatly expanded the reading materials available for students by adding digital reading materials and by including reading sources other than books, such as newspaper articles, comics, magazines, journals, brochures, posters, and educational videos (Jalel et al., 2023; Ponnudurai & Zamin, 2022; Rosdi, 2023; Taib et al., 2022). The inclusion of digital reading materials was to ensure that the NILAM programme kept abreast with changes in the reading behaviour of Malaysians, as preference for digital books kept increasing each year (Jalel et al., 2023).

According to the 2019, 2020, and 2021 National Library of Malaysia reports, more Malaysians were borrowing and referring to digital reading materials (Jalel et al., 2023). Moreover, Muhamad et al. (2020) revealed that students read books the most, followed by newspapers and magazines. The majority of the students read books for their homework and examinations rather than for entertainment (Muhamad et

al., 2020). Based on these findings, the reading list was expanded to entertainment materials, which helped to increase their reading interest.

The second reform encouraged school teachers and staff to set up various post-reading activities for students, such as storytelling, book reviews, book talks, reading competitions, community workshops, reading clubs, and creative writing (Adnan et al., 2023; Arsad & Janan, 2022; Ponnudorai & Zamin, 2022; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Taib et al., 2022) aimed at nurturing students into active readers.

Incentives to Promote Reading Motivation in the NILAM Programme

Teachers play an important role in encouraging students to be more involved in the NILAM programme (Muhamad et al., 2020; Rahman & Lee, 2022; Rahman & Mohamad, 2023; Taib et al., 2022). One common method that teachers use to motivate students to read involves the use of incentives (Rahman & Mohamad, 2023). Incentives can be either recognition, awards, or praise (Rahman & Mohamad, 2023), and they create an extrinsic motivation for students to read, as their actions are influenced by external rewards (Indrayadi, 2021; Kurniawati et al., 2023; Manuas et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

The NILAM programme provides awards based on the number of books students have read, as shown in their NILAM programme record book (Taib et al., 2022). There are four awards available, which are the Bronze, Silver, Gold, and NILAM awards (Taib et al., 2022). Students who win the NILAM award are those who read the greatest number of books, which is 360 and above for primary school students (Taib et al., 2022). Aside from reading, these awards can also be earned by participating in post-reading activities organised in their classes or schools (Ponnudorai & Zamin, 2022; Taib et al., 2022). In addition to these four awards, other external rewards include certificates, trophies, cash prizes, book prizes, or commendations in school reports (Chua, 2022; Ponnudorai & Zamin, 2022; Taib et al., 2022).

Methodology

Participants

This study involved 12 teachers from a national primary school in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. All were either English or Malay language teachers for Year 1 to Year 6 students, except for one who was a school librarian. Table 1 shows the demographic background of the teachers interviewed for this study.

Table 1. Demographic background of teachers interviewed

Teacher	Gender	Ethnicity	Specialization
T1	Female	Malay	Librarian
T2	Female	Malay	English language

Table 1. (con't)

Teacher	Gender	Ethnicity	Specialization
T3	Female	Malay	Malay language
T4	Female	Malay	English language
T5	Female	Malay	Malay language
T6	Female	Malay	Malay language
T7	Female	Chinese	English language
T8	Female	Malay	English language
T9	Female	Malay	Malay language
T10	Female	Malay	Malay language
T11	Female	Malay	English language
T12	Female	Malay	English language

Convenience sampling was utilised for this study. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that collects data from a readily accessible target population (Andrade, 2020; Golzar et al., 2022; Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020; Stratton, 2021). The teachers took part in the study on a voluntary basis. Through convenience sampling, the researcher was able to gather data from them with relative ease in a short period of time.

Data Collection

This study adopted a qualitative research design. Data was collected from interviews with the primary school teachers. Each interview was carried out individually and face-to-face with the participants in either English or Malay based on the participant's language preference. Each interview took about 20 minutes. All interviews were recorded as audio files.

The interview questions were designed based on the existing literature of Adnan et al. (2023), who conducted interviews with teachers from a rural school to investigate their perceptions of students' reading motivation and interest, along with their experiences in encouraging students to read.

Data Analysis

Firstly, all interviews were recorded into audio files. Secondly, all the recorded interviews were converted into transcripts. The interviews carried out in Malay were translated to English. Thirdly, the data were analysed using coding and thematic analysis. Coding is used to organise and label data to aid in the identification of themes, categories, and meanings for a study (Knott et al., 2022; Mezmir, 2020),

while thematic analysis assists the researcher in developing, analysing, and interpreting patterns or themes found in interview content (Knott et al., 2022). Meaningful statements and texts obtained from the interview transcripts were turned into codes (Dye, 2021). The codes were later grouped into categories. Themes were assigned based on the patterns found from the codes and categories. Fourthly, the interview data were analysed and interpreted based on existing literature and theories. Finally, the findings were reviewed and reported (Dye, 2021).

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the study, all the interview data, including data that contradicted others, were collected, analysed, and presented, which helped to reduce the risk of researcher bias. Moreover, during the interview, the researcher also checked whether the teachers understood the questions. The researcher had explained and clarified the data the questions sought to uncover, so the participants had a more accurate understanding of the interview. Furthermore, the researcher also strived to stay neutral when obtaining and analysing the data (Coleman, 2021).

To ensure the reliability of the study, the researcher kept the interview process as transparent as possible. Transparency was achieved by producing the interview protocols in both English and Malay languages for the study. In addition, the researcher ensured that the interview data was replicable, which was done by producing audio recordings and transcripts to show that the data obtained from the interviews were consistent (Coleman, 2021).

Findings

Types of Incentives to Promote Primary Students' Reading Motivation in the NILAM Programme

The results showed that all 12 teachers used incentives to promote reading motivation among their students in the NILAM programme. Two themes emerged from the interview data, which were rewards and recognition, as shown in Figure 1.

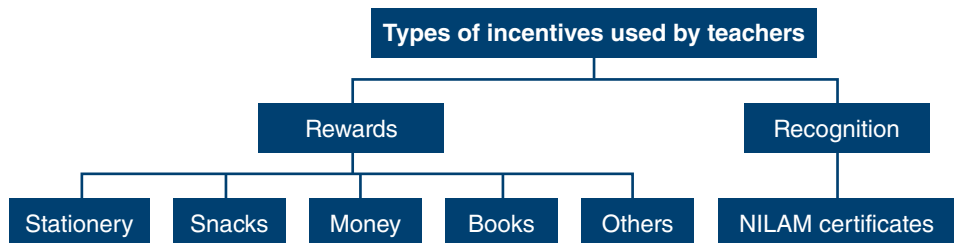


Figure 1. Types of incentives used by teachers to motivate reading among primary students in the NILAM programme

Rewards

There were five types of rewards that teachers used to promote reading among students in the NILAM programme, which consisted of stationery, snacks, money, books, and others. Pencils were the most popular option, with four teachers using them. Notebooks were the second option, as shared by three teachers. Erasers were used by two teachers. Pencil cases, files, and rulers were each given by T1, T2, and T7. Lastly, three teachers stated that they used stationery in general. In the interview, T1 stated that teachers prefer to give stationery because it is cheap and affordable. Further, T10 said, *“Students are generally happy to receive gifts as long as they can use the gifts.”*

In the interview, T1 stated that she offered biscuits and drinks to students who finished one NILAM record book, which has 30 pages. According to T4, she also occasionally provided food to her students. T1 also shared that she offered RM2 as a monetary reward for students that managed to finish one NILAM record book.

In terms of books as incentives, storybooks was the most popular, with five teachers using them. T2 offered activity books and dictionaries to students, while T5 offered comics. Another two teachers stated that they gave books in general. According to T1 and T10, many students in this school came from poor families, and the act of giving storybooks helped the students improve their reading skills while saving their parents’ hard-earned money.

Two teachers gave stickers to students. Aside from stickers, T2 provided pins, while T9 offered keychains. T6 stated that she provided students gifts in general. As for T1, she repurposed the leftover prizes from the school’s Poem Declaration competitions for the NILAM programme.

Recognition

The NILAM certificates were notably used by teachers to give recognition to students. The interviews revealed that three teachers provided NILAM certificates to students. The certificates were available in Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The certificates were categorised based on the number of books read. The teachers stated that students were also recognised for their hard work and passion for reading when they were given the NILAM certificates.

Impact of Incentives on Primary Students’ Reading Motivation in the NILAM Programme

The findings revealed the incentives impacted the students’ reading motivation differently, which were categorised as effective, effective to some extent, and not effective.

Incentives are Effective

Seven teachers agreed that incentives were effective in promoting reading motivation among the primary school students in the NILAM programme. Based on the interviews, four teachers believed that incentives helped to motivate students to read more. Moreover, four teachers stated that incentives have encouraged students to be independent readers, with three teachers shared that students read books by themselves during break times and after they finished their work.

Two teachers, T2 and T4, used incentives to reward students for their hard work and passion for reading, which makes them feel appreciated for their efforts, and they became more motivated to read. T2 also shared, "*Incentives also encourage other students when their friends see... maybe this girl receives something from school, so they will be motivated to read more books.*"

Furthermore, T9 commented, "*Students are happier and more excited, and they often request to go to the library to read books because they know that they will receive the incentives after they read many books.*"

T10 explained that incentives helped to increase the students' reading confidence and motivation as teachers rewarded students for their reading efforts, even when they only managed to read one sentence. Three teachers stated that students liked to earn rewards, and the incentives used by teachers were helpful in motivating them to read more.

Incentives are Effective to Some Extent

Four teachers, including T1, T6, T7, and T11, expressed that incentives were effective to some extent in promoting reading among the primary school students in the NILAM programme. In the interviews, T6 revealed that incentives were less effective on lower-class students and only slightly more effective on middle-class students. Moreover, T7 explained that incentives did motivate students to read more, but the students' intrinsic motivation was also important. Both T6 and T7 agreed that incentives were less effective on lower-class students because they have less intrinsic motivation than the first-class students and the middle-class students. They believed that the students' intrinsic motivation remained a notable influence, and it should be cultivated. In addition, T11 stated that incentives were helpful but not entirely effective, as students are not attracted to simple incentives like stationery and books. T11 also revealed that students are reading less as they prefer technology and multimedia to books.

According to T1, incentives were mostly effective on poorer students but not all. She revealed that some incentives, such as the RM2 money reward, were not enticing to some students, as they regarded it as an insignificant amount. Nevertheless, she reaffirmed that incentives were attractive, especially to the students from poor

families. She reinforced her claim with her observations of a student from an impoverished family who started to read more since she received the incentive as her first reward. T1 added that the school could not afford expensive incentives due to its tight budget. She stated that the yearly school budget is RM12,000, and RM9,000 was spent on buying books and reading materials for students and teachers. T1 who presented an unexpected insight, stated that students loved reading, but they were not interested in recording what they had read into the NILAM record book and the AINS platform (Advanced Integrated NILAM System), which is a digital NILAM recording system implemented by the MoE in June 2024. Based on her observations, T1 explained, *“An increasing number of students borrow storybooks from the library and then increase the number of total books lost from the library... it shows that students read, but they didn’t return the book.”*

Incentives are Ineffective

Only one teacher, T12, claimed that incentives are not effective in promoting reading among the students in the NILAM programme. She stated that students nowadays were uninterested in the yearly NILAM awards and stationery and books provided by the teachers. She said, *“Most students nowadays are more into IT [information technology]... They don’t like to use books; they like to use handphones, iPads...”*

Methods to Enhance the Impact of Incentives on Primary Students’ Reading Motivation in the NILAM Programme

The teachers suggested two approaches, namely integrating positive reinforcement and encouraging parents’ involvement to enhance the impact of the incentives in promoting primary school students’ reading motivation in the NILAM programme.

Positive Reinforcement

To enhance the impact of incentives, the teachers suggested positive reinforcement in three ways. The first refers to a “Grand Incentive” based on students’ preferences that acknowledges students’ reading efforts.

Four teachers suggested setting up a “Grand Incentive” as a yearly gift for students. They suggested giving students rewards such as a bicycle, a mobile phone, or a tablet. One teacher suggested technological gadgets as the “Grand Incentive” as it could encourage students to read digital content and help them keep up with the current times. However, three other teachers contended that schools cannot afford a “Grand Incentive” gift due to their tight budgets. They could only get gifts through sponsors from non-governmental organisations or companies. In addition, they also needed to ensure that the “Grand Incentive” is aligned with students’ interests. For example, a bicycle can be offered as the “Grand Incentive” to the students, but it

should be taken into account that students nowadays are no longer interested in outdoor activities since they are more attached to their phones.

Secondly, one teacher suggested giving incentives that are practical to students' learning needs. For example, she would provide pencils to students because they need to write and take notes. Another teacher proposed the idea of giving storybooks, as they could be attractive to students, which would motivate the students to read more. In addition, one teacher stated that she would provide students with better rewards in general. As for T1, she had been providing mysterious, random gifts to students. She considered openly informing students about the types of incentives in the hopes that she could receive students' feedback and then make adjustments to make them more enticing to students.

Moreover, three teachers considered technological devices like mobile phones and the iPad because students nowadays have great interest in technology and gadgets. T2 said, *"Before COVID, if you gave them pencils or notebooks, files, they would appreciate it. But now they are more into technology... You can give them cash or things that they like. They like cartoon characters. You can get them a bag with cartoon characters, pencil cases with cartoon characters. The reward needs to be updated with what they like, what they prefer now. We cannot just simply give them stationery, pencils, rulers, erasers. They have it... the impact won't be that big."*

Lastly, four teachers recommended acknowledging students' reading efforts. One teacher proposed a Model Student or a Model NILAM, one each for boys and girls. Three teachers perceived that giving praises and encouraging words to students when they demonstrated desirable actions like going to the library to read books was an effective method. T6 shared, *"I like to use praises. We give praises... Students like to be praised... For example, we sometimes give praises like "You're so clever" or "Look at them, so clever," but if they are lazy, we say, "Be a bit more hard-working."*

Parental Involvement in the NILAM Programme

Two teachers proposed that parents should get involved in the NILAM programme. One teacher suggested that the school could hold activities for parents and their children to read together. Another teacher mentioned that some schools that have the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) contribute funding to the NILAM programme.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify the types of incentives used by primary school teachers to promote students' reading motivation in the NILAM programme, their impacts, and ways to enhance this approach. The findings reveal that all 12 teachers in the NILAM programme supported the suggestion by Rahman and Mohamad (2023) that teachers can provide incentives such as rewards or achievements to inspire

students to read. The teachers gave rewards in the forms of stationery, snacks, money, books, and other items such as keychains, stickers, and leftover prizes from the school's Poem Declaration competitions. These incentives were mentioned by Ponnudurai & Zamin (2022) as a type of post-reading initiative for the NILAM programme. Besides, teachers also provided NILAM certificates as a way to recognise their students' hard work and passion for reading, as mentioned (Taib et al., 2022).

The research findings on the impact of incentives on students' reading motivation produced mixed results. Seven teachers claimed that incentives were effective. Incentives encourage students to read more and become independent readers (Indrayadi, 2021). This finding is consistent with a study by Gunaretnam (2021) which revealed that teachers agreed that material reinforcement such as stationery, stickers and candy had a positive effect on the academic performance of primary school students. In Indrayadi's (2021) study, the questionnaires revealed that students who took English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in an Indonesian school were more motivated by external reasons like grades, recognition and competition when it comes to reading.

The findings suggest that incentives create a "ripple effect" — when students saw their peers receiving incentives in the NILAM programme, they were motivated to read more books. Incentives were found to make reading activities more exciting and helped to increase the reading confidence among students. Further, positive reinforcement used in the classroom makes the students feel good about themselves, and it increases their enjoyment and interest in learning. These positive feelings give the students motivation and desire to improve their learning skills and to pursue new knowledge and challenges (Gunaretnam, 2021). They are more likely to participate in learning activities of their own volition, which turns them into independent learners.

The teachers suggested a few ways to enhance the impact of using incentives to promote reading motivation among primary school students in the NILAM programme. These include using other forms of positive reinforcement and encouraging parents' participation in this programme. The teachers highlighted the need to take students' interests into consideration when determining the types of incentives. It is crucial to ensure that the incentives are attractive, practical to the students' needs, and more inclined to technology. Teachers also emphasised the importance of parents' involvement in the NILAM programme to enhance the impact of incentives.

The study by A. Ghani et al. (2021) revealed that many students are not motivated to read because their parents are not supportive of their reading habits, either due to long working hours or the lack of reading interest. Muhamad et al. (2020) explained that parents should be actively involved in motivating their children to read because familial ties enable parents to enact a strong influence on

their children's reading habits. This statement is supported by A. Ghani et al. (2021), whose findings revealed that students are not interested in reading because they do not see their parents do any reading. Muhamad et al. (2020) as well as Rahman and Mohamad (2023) suggested that parents could get involved in fostering their children's reading habits by being avid readers themselves, setting up a comfortable reading environment, providing various reading content, and having reading activities with their children. In addition, Ponnudurai and Zamin (2022) suggested that the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) could help parents become more involved in the NILAM programme by donating books to families who could not afford them so that their children would have the resources to read.

This study also reveals that students like to read, but they are not recording what they have read in the NILAM record book and the AINS platform. The participants suggested that time constraints and a lack of interest in writing might be the reason for the poor record numbers. However, according to A. Ghani et al. (2021), the NILAM programme had been criticised for placing priority on the documentation of students' reading instead of making reading activities fun for them, and in turn, students failed to develop a reading habit.

According to Potter (2016), students found the requirement to record their reading in a journal as a tedious chore, which made reading a less enjoyable activity. To make matters worse, students who dislike writing or have poor writing skills would struggle to record what they have read, which would make them resent reading (Potter, 2016). Besides that, T1 stated that most students tend to forget their reading content upon finishing the books, and they ended up forgetting to record their reading or return the books to the library, which implies that there is a lack of appreciation for reading among students as they do not fully understand the long-term benefits of reading.

Since the research findings reveal that students nowadays are more interested in technology and gadgets, it is possible for teachers to implement the use of technology into the NILAM programme to make reading more enjoyable and encourage students to actively record what they have read. According to Rodriguez (2024), the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the usage of technology among students, which encourages them to be independent learners as they can easily gain access to various digital learning formats. Moreover, Jalel et al. (2023) stated that many Malaysians are increasingly turning to digital reading materials, and studies have also shown that digital storytelling videos can increase students' reading interest and encourage them to be lifelong readers. Although technological devices like mobile phones, the iPad and tablets may be given as incentives to motivate students to read more, it is important for teachers and parents to educate the students about digital ethics and to regulate their screen time and the content they are looking into (Rodriguez, 2024).

Conclusion

This study concluded that teachers use incentives to promote primary school students' reading motivation in the NILAM programme. Generally, incentives have a positive impact on encouraging students to participate more actively in the NILAM programme. This study also suggests other methods besides incentives that teachers can use to motivate primary school students to read. These results should be taken into account when considering how to incorporate positive reinforcement into the NILAM programme effectively.

This study has practical implications that can be taken into account in improving the NILAM programme. In identifying the different types of incentives for the NILAM programme, teachers and MoE can consider offering more attractive incentives to the students, which can make reading activities more exciting and competitive, and this can increase students' reading motivation. Unfortunately, the findings also highlight that the school budget is a main impediment in providing incentives to students. The MoE can consider increasing funding to schools to improve their reading facilities and resources. Besides that, school administrators can hold fundraising campaigns and seek sponsorships to gain more funding to provide better incentives for the NILAM programme, which can increase students' reading motivation.

Furthermore, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) can help parents become more involved in the NILAM programme. Teachers can use text messages to remind parents to read with their children during their free time and to check whether the children have recorded what they have read into the NILAM record book and the AINS platform. The teachers can donate reading materials to poor families, which can help to relieve parents' expenses while ensuring their children have sufficient reading resources at home.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the study sample was restricted to English and Malay language teachers at the primary school level. The research findings cannot be generalised to language teachers at the secondary school level or teachers who are not specialised in the English or Malay language subjects.

Secondly, the research was carried out in a governmental school, which means that the findings cannot be generalised to private or international schools. Moreover, the school chosen for this research is located at Petaling Jaya, Selangor. As such, the findings cannot be generalised to schools located in the rural areas of Selangor and to schools in other Malaysian states. Further, the school chosen for this research is attended by students from low-income families. Hence, the findings cannot be generalised to schools attended by students from middle- or high-income families.

Lastly, the study used a limited sample of 12 language teachers using convenience sampling. The research participants did not include any students. Thus, it is unclear

if the incentives mentioned by the teachers really interested them. There are no insights on students' perspectives about which types of incentives work for them and their experiences in the NILAM programme. As a result, there is no data for triangulation.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Future studies can include other language teachers, such as those who specialise in the Mandarin language. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is encouraging students to acquire a third language, in which the most popular option is the Mandarin language. The NILAM programme can also benefit from data regarding the methods used by Mandarin language teachers to encourage students to read Mandarin books.

Additionally, language teachers from secondary schools can be included in future studies, as these teachers may use other methods to motivate their students to read because incentives may be less effective on secondary school students, who are between 13 and 17 years old. Moreover, future research can be conducted in private and international schools that implement the NILAM programme. Aside from the NILAM programme, other extensive reading programmes that may be implemented by other schools can also be included in similar future studies.

Additionally, similar studies can be carried in schools located in the rural areas of Selangor and other Malaysian states, as environment and culture may have a different effect on students' reading motivation. In addition, future research can be done in schools attended by students from middle- or high-income families, where incentives are more likely to be less effective in promoting reading motivation among students in the NILAM programme.

Additionally, a larger sample of teachers as research participants can be used for future studies to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding how the NILAM programme is run. A quantitative research design or mixed research design may be incorporated for further research. Besides that, it is recommended that future studies should include students as participants. Moreover, other topics of interest that can be explored include students not recording what they have read in the NILAM record book and the AINS platform, the effectiveness of the AINS platform in promoting reading motivation among students, comparison of students' reading preferences before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, students' preferred incentives and students' preferred reading materials so they can be included in the school library.

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