ENHANCING EARLY READING COMPETENCE THROUGH WHOLE WORD METHOD-BASED SCRAPBOOK MEDIA IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACK

This study was motivated by the low early Reading skills of elementary school students, which were caused by mechanistic learning practices and the lack of engaging instructional media suitable for children's developmental characteristics. This problem highlights the need for innovative learning approaches that emphasize visual experiences, motor activities, and the comprehension of contextual meaning. The purpose of this study was to develop scrapbook media based on the Whole Word Method to enhance elementary students' early Reading competence. This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) method using the ADDIE model, which includes the stages of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The research subjects comprised 25 first-grade students and one classroom teacher at SD Negeri 162/IV in Jambi City. The results indicate that the developed scrapbook media met the criteria for very high validity (91.4%), high practicality (93.7%), and effectiveness, with the average score increasing from 63.5 to 87.2 (N-Gain = 0.65, medium–high category). The scrapbook media proved capable of improving students' early Reading skills through contextual, visual, and enjoyable learning activities. This study recommends that elementary school teachers utilize visually creative media, such as scrapbooks, as an alternative for early-phase literacy instruction.

Keywords: Whole Word Method, Scrapbook Media, Early Reading, Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is a fundamental aspect of basic literacy development in elementary schools. Reading is not merely an activity of recognizing letters and words, but also involves comprehending the meaning of language symbols presented in texts (Riyanti, 2021). At the elementary school level, particularly for students in Phase A, early Reading skills serve as the foundation for future learning success. Through Reading activities, students develop critical thinking skills, expand their knowledge, and build sensitivity to information conveyed in various learning contexts (Cynthia et al., 2023). Therefore, early Reading ability is not only an indicator of academic achievement but also a reflection of students' readiness to engage in more complex learning processes.

Despite its importance, the reality in the field indicates that elementary students' early Reading skills in Indonesia remain relatively low. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the National Assessment show that most students struggle to understand simple texts, particularly in connecting words to their meanings and to sentence context (Tika & Sudiansyah, 2024). This condition suggests that the early Reading learning process has not been fully optimized, especially in developing students' meaningful thinking

skills. Many teachers still emphasize mechanistic learning by teaching letters in isolation without considering the context and meaning of the words being learned. Consequently, Reading activities become monotonous routines that fail to foster students' learning motivation.

Another factor exacerbating this situation is the limited availability of instructional media suitable for the developmental characteristics of elementary-aged children (Qomariyah et al., 2022). Most teachers still rely on textbooks and blackboards as the primary media, while Phase A students tend to have visual and kinesthetic learning styles. Children at this age require stimuli such as colors, images, and simple physical activities to grasp the meaning of words and sentences. The lack of contextual visual media makes the Reading learning process rigid and less engaging, making it difficult for students to connect written symbols with their everyday experiences (Fawaz & Nazrah, 2025). This condition underscores the need for innovative learning media that offer enjoyable, meaningful learning experiences.

In addition to the issue of instructional media, the Reading and learning approaches employed do not fully align with students' cognitive developmental stages. According to Piaget's theory of development, elementary-aged children are in the concrete operational stage, in which conceptual understanding is formed through direct experience and visual representations. However, Reading instruction in many schools remains teacher-centered, offering little opportunity for students to engage actively with learning materials. As a result, students are unable to construct meaning independently and tend to merely imitate or memorize letter sounds without understanding words as a whole. This indicates a gap between child development theory and actual classroom practices in elementary schools.

The gap between ideal conditions and classroom practice underscores the need for innovative Reading instruction that emphasizes active, contextual learning experiences. Reading instruction should not only focus on the technical aspect of letter recognition but also on developing the ability to comprehend meaning and relate it to everyday life (Sari et al., 2023). One approach relevant to this need is the Whole Word Method, which introduces words as complete units rather than letter by letter. This method emphasizes understanding word meanings in visual contexts, making it more suitable for Phase A children who learn through observation and meaning association.

The demand for innovative learning becomes even more urgent with the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes student-centered learning. This curriculum requires teachers to provide contextual, creative, and enjoyable learning experiences, including in basic literacy instruction. In this context, integrating the Whole Word Method with visual learning media, such as scrapbooks, offers a promising solution. The use of scrapbook

media allows students to learn words through images, colors, and physical activities such as pasting and matching, making the learning process more engaging and motivating (Rahayu, 2019).

The global Reading approach, or Whole Word Method, has been widely implemented across countries as an alternative to the mechanistic phonics method. This method focuses on introducing meaningful whole words that are directly connected to children's visual experiences. In the context of early Reading instruction, this approach helps students understand word meanings by linking visual forms to everyday life contexts. Consequently, students not only recognize letter shapes but also comprehend the meaning behind the words they read. Such an approach aligns more closely with the learning characteristics of early-phase children, who tend to think concretely and require direct experiences to construct understanding.

However, various studies in Indonesia indicate that implementing the Whole Word Method continues to pose challenges in the instructional media used by teachers (Palupi et al., 2023; Mumtazzah & Yasin, 2025; Nuralif et al., 2023). In practice, most teachers rely solely on word cards or blackboards, without visual media that can reinforce the association between words and meanings. This limitation causes Reading instruction using this method to fall short of achieving optimal results. Preliminary observations at SD Negeri 162/IV, Jambi City, also showed that, although teachers attempt to introduce whole words, students still struggle to understand word meanings due to a lack of engaging, interactive learning media. This emphasizes that the effectiveness of the Whole Word Method heavily depends on the media used to support the learning process.

In this context, visual-based instructional media, such as scrapbooks, can provide a relevant and effective innovative solution. Scrapbooks are creative book media that combine text, images, and interactive activities such as pasting, matching, and grouping words by meaning. This media allows students to learn through multisensory experiences that integrate visual, kinesthetic, and cognitive elements. By integrating the Whole Word Method into scrapbook media, students not only read words but also actively interact with the learning content (Sari et al., 2025). Activities such as pasting images or matching words help students understand meanings more concretely and enjoyably.

The use of scrapbooks in Reading instruction also aligns with the principles of constructivism, which emphasize students' active role in constructing meaning. Through scrapbooks, students are given opportunities to explore, identify relationships between images and words, and construct meaning based on their own learning experiences. This approach is also consistent with the principles of experiential learning in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, where direct

experience serves as the core of the learning process. Therefore, scrapbook media is not merely a visual aid but also an active learning platform that supports the development of critical thinking, creativity, and students' curiosity.

Previous studies on the development of early Reading instructional media have primarily focused on digital media or simple word cards. In contrast, the integration of the Whole Word Method with scrapbook media has not been explored in depth. Some studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the global Reading method in improving early Reading skills, but they have not highlighted how concrete visual media such as scrapbooks can reinforce learning outcomes (Fahmiyah et al., 2025; Purba, 2024; Simamora & Rambe, 2024). Therefore, this study offers a novel approach by combining meaning-based instructional methods with interactive visual learning media. This innovation is expected to bridge the gap between early Reading learning theory and practical classroom implementation.

Based on the background and identified gaps, this study aims to develop scrapbook media using the Whole Word Method to enhance the early Reading skills of Phase A elementary students. The study focuses on the process of media development, its validity, practicality, and effectiveness within the context of basic literacy instruction. The results are expected to make theoretical contributions to the development of knowledge in primary education, as well as practical contributions in the form of a learning media model that can be implemented by teachers in Reading instruction. Consequently, this study not only introduces innovations in instructional methods and media but also supports meaningful, enjoyable, and student-centered literacy learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Reading instruction represents a critical phase in the development of basic literacy skills in school-aged children (Nahdi & Yunitasari, 2019). According to child language development theory, Reading involves not only the ability to recognize letters but also the ability to comprehend meaning through visual symbols and sounds. At the initial stage, children need enjoyable Reading experiences to foster motivation and literacy habits. Piaget's cognitive development theory emphasizes that elementary-aged children are in the concrete operational stage, in which conceptual understanding is acquired through direct experience and tangible objects. Therefore, Reading instruction at this stage should be designed using approaches and media that align with children's concrete thinking characteristics.

One approach relevant for developing early Reading skills is the Whole Word Method, also known as the global method. This method emphasizes recognizing whole words rather

than letter-by-letter spelling. According to Gestalt theory, children tend to perceive objects holistically before recognizing their individual components, so introducing whole words helps them understand meanings more quickly. The Whole Word Method allows students to associate the visual form of words with their experiential context, making the Reading process more meaningful (Asyari & Prasetyo, 2025). Previous studies by Anita et al. (2025), Sulistyowati (2024), and Wati (2023) have shown that this method is efficacious in improving vocabulary mastery and meaning comprehension among early elementary students, as it strengthens the relationships among visual perception, sound, and meaning.

In addition to being supported by Gestalt theory, the implementation of the Whole Word Method is also firmly grounded in constructivist theory as proposed by Jerome Bruner. Bruner categorizes learning into three modes of representation: enactive (through action), iconic (through images or visual symbols), and symbolic (through abstract language). In the context of early Reading, the Whole Word Method naturally integrates these three stages: students engage in concrete activities, recognize images or words, and ultimately understand linguistic symbols (Simamora & Rambe, 2024). Thus, Reading instruction using the Whole Word Method provides multisensory experiences that help students actively construct meaning rather than merely memorize letter forms.

However, the success of this method heavily depends on the instructional media employed. Without engaging and contextual media support, students can easily lose focus and struggle to associate words with their meanings (Yusra et al., 2025). Instructional media serve as a means to concretize abstract concepts and act as a bridge between real experiences and language symbols. In the context of early Reading instruction, visual media such as images, word cards, or manipulatives are essential for helping children develop symbolic perception and understanding of word meanings. Therefore, the development of media that integrate the Whole Word Method with creative, enjoyable learning experiences is an urgent need in the elementary school learning context.

Instructional media play a strategic role in creating compelling, engaging, and meaningful learning processes. According to Wulandari and Warhdani (2024), instructional media function as tools that connect students' learning experiences with the objects or concepts being studied through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic representations. In the context of early Reading instruction, visual media are necessary to help students understand the relationship between letter symbols and word meanings. One medium that meets this need is the scrapbook, a creative book combining text, images, colors, and simple motor activities. This media provides students

with opportunities to learn through manipulative and exploratory activities that support cognitive development and strengthen motivation to learn.

The advantage of scrapbooks lies in their ability to integrate multiple sensory pathways in the learning process (Lestari et al., 2024). This aligns with the principles of multisensory learning, which emphasize engaging the senses of sight, hearing, and movement to deepen understanding. Orton-Gillingham's theory explains that multisensory stimulation can strengthen neural connections involved in language processing, thereby enhancing word recognition and comprehension skills in elementary-aged children. In practice, scrapbooks provide a rich learning experience through activities such as viewing images, Reading texts, listening to teacher explanations, and performing tasks like pasting or categorizing words. This approach helps students recognize whole words and understand their meanings through enjoyable, hands-on experiences.

In addition to supporting cognitive development, scrapbooking also positively affects students' affective and psychomotor domains. Through creative activities such as pasting, drawing, and matching images with words, students not only learn to read but also develop fine motor coordination and social skills through group work (Susiana, 2023). According to experiential learning theory, concrete experiences strengthen concept formation and long-term memory retention. Therefore, scrapbook media serve as a tool that balances intellectual and emotional aspects in early Reading instruction while fostering a positive attachment between students and literacy activities.

The implementation of scrapbook media also aligns with the principles of contextual learning promoted in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning that is grounded in real-life experiences. Scrapbooks provide students with opportunities to relate words to daily experiences, such as recognizing objects around the home, school environment, or social activities they engage in. Consequently, Reading instruction becomes less abstract and transforms into contextual, creative, and enjoyable activities. This approach not only strengthens basic literacy but also supports the achievement of the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly in the dimensions of critical and creative thinking.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the ADDIE model, comprising the stages of Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate. This model was chosen for its systematic nature and its relevance to producing educational products that are valid, practical, and effective in improving learning quality (Siregar & Rahmayanti, 2025). The research was conducted at SD Negeri 162/IV, Jambi City, with first-grade students as the

primary subjects and media users. Experts in content, media, and language were also involved as validators in the product feasibility assessment.

The research stages began with a needs analysis to identify problems in early Reading instruction and the characteristics of the students. This was followed by the design and development of scrapbook media based on the Whole Word Method, which experts validated to ensure the appropriateness of content, appearance, and language. The revised product was then implemented in learning activities to assess its practicality and effectiveness in improving students' Reading skills. Each stage of the ADDIE model was conducted sequentially and reflectively to ensure the quality of the developed product.

Picture 1. ADDIE Model Flow

Stages of the ADDIE Model in Scrapbook Development
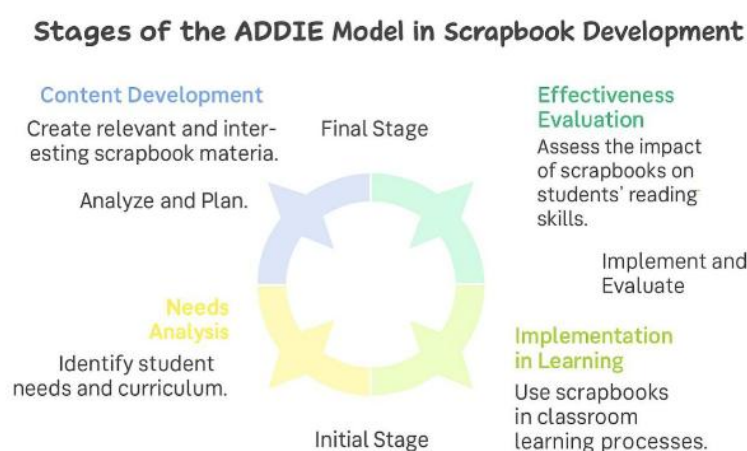
Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and early Reading tests. Quantitative data were obtained from expert validation results, user responses, and students' pre-test and posttest scores, which were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, percentages, and N-Gain calculations. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed descriptively to support the interpretation of results. The data analysis was conducted integratively to draw objective conclusions regarding the validity, practicality, and effectiveness of Whole Word Method-based scrapbook media in enhancing elementary students' early Reading skills.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study produced a developmental product in the form of scrapbook media based on the Whole Word Method, designed to enhance early Reading skills of first-grade elementary students. The media was developed using the ADDIE model, which consists of five stages: Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate. The development stages were carried out systematically to produce media that are valid, practical, and effective. The main objective of

the study was to create visually engaging media that aligns with the cognitive characteristics of students at the concrete operational stage and supports meaning-based Reading skills. The Whole Word Method was chosen because it aligns with Reading instruction principles that emphasize understanding words as wholes through visual context rather than merely recognizing letters or spelling.

The needs analysis stage began with observations of Reading activities in first-grade classes at SD Negeri 162/IV, Jambi City. The observations revealed that most students were unable to recognize vowels and consonants consistently and had difficulty distinguishing syllables with similar sounds. Teachers reported that Reading instruction remained conventional, relying on traditional spelling methods and limited media such as blackboards and textbooks. This condition led to low student motivation and rapid loss of concentration during learning. Based on these findings, the researchers identified the need for innovative media that integrates visual elements, motor activities, and meaning associations to make Reading instruction more enjoyable and meaningful. These findings support the views of Permatasari (2025) and Sutini (2025), which emphasize that elementary-aged children require concrete learning experiences through visual representations to understand abstract symbols such as letters and words.

The design stage involved creating an eight-page colored scrapbook. Each page contained themes relevant to children's experiences, such as "Recognizing Vowels and Consonants," "Uppercase and Lowercase Letters," and exercises for Reading syllables like ba–bi–bu–be–bo. The scrapbook's visual design featured a combination of images, bright colors, and simple motor activities such as tracing letters, matching pictures with words, and Reading together with the teacher. For example, on the "Vowels" page, students learned the letters A, I, U, E, and O through contextual words such as Ayam (Chicken), Ikan (Fish), Unta (Camel), Ember (Bucket), and Obat (Medicine). Learning activities with the scrapbook allowed students to connect written symbols with familiar real-life objects. This approach aligns with Sayeski et al. (2019), who assert that learning processes involving visual, auditory, and motor activities can strengthen children's retention and understanding of language symbols.

The development stage encompassed the production and validation process of the media by experts. Validation was conducted by three validators, namely a media expert, a content expert, and a language expert. Each validator assessed the media's feasibility in terms of content, visual design, and language. The validation results showed that the scrapbook media achieved an average score of 91.4%, indicating "very valid." The content aspect was rated highly relevant to the objectives of early Reading instruction, as it introduced letters, syllables, and

simple contextual words. The visual aspect received high marks due to its bright, proportionate design, which is appropriate for young children's characteristics. The language aspect was also well rated because it used simple, communicative sentences. These results align with the opinion of Afrilia et al. (2022), who stated that visually appealing instructional media that match students' abilities can enhance both motivation and learning effectiveness.

Table 1. Validation Results of Scrapbook Media Based on the Whole Word Method

Assessed Aspect	Validator 1	Validator 2	Validator 3	Average (%)	Category
Content relevance and learning objectives	90	92	93	91.6	Very valid
Visual design and illustrations	89	90	94	91.0	Very valid
Language and readability	92	91	93	92.0	Very valid
Suitability for student characteristics	91	92	91	91.3	Very valid
Overall average	—	—	—	91.4	Very valid

The design of the developed scrapbook media displays colored pages combining text, images, and student activities. Each page was designed to allow students to read words in an engaging and enjoyable context. The presence of supporting images helps children recognize words through visual associations, while motor activities such as tracing lines and pasting letters reinforce students' physical involvement in the learning process. Learning with the scrapbook makes the Reading experience more meaningful and interactive. Theoretically, these findings support Yu (2012), who argues that concrete and visual experiences serve as an important bridge to symbolic understanding in learning to read.

The implementation stage was conducted in first-grade classes at SD Negeri 162/IV in Jambi City over four meetings, each lasting two lessons (2 × 35 minutes). The teacher acted as a facilitator, guiding students in using the scrapbook to recognize letters, syllables, and simple words. Observations indicated that students' learning activities increased compared to previous lessons using conventional spelling methods. Students appeared more focused, enthusiastic, and able to maintain attention until the end of the lesson. They showed strong interest in the colorful, interactive scrapbook, especially in activities such as tracing letters and matching images to words. These findings indicate that concrete visual-based media can enhance students' learning motivation, in line with Lee and Reeves (2017), who emphasize that direct learning experiences through visual activities are highly effective in building understanding.

However, several other studies show different results. For example, according to Arianti et al. (2023) and Jannah & Artaningsih (2025), the use of visual media and the Whole Word method does not continually improve early Reading skills for all children, especially for students with phonetic processing disorders or those accustomed to traditional phonics methods.

Focusing solely on whole-word recognition can hinder students' ability to recognize letter patterns and systematically pronounce syllables (Fitriyana et al., 2025). This indicates that the effectiveness of methods and media depends heavily on students' individual characteristics and the learning context.

In addition to enhancing motivation, the scrapbook media also significantly impacted students' engagement and independence in learning. According to observation notes, 92% of students actively participated in Reading activities, pasting letters, and pronouncing words together with the teacher. Students appeared able to recognize vowels and consonants correctly and began Reading whole words without spelling them out. Learning in an enjoyable atmosphere also reduced students' anxiety in facing Reading tasks. This condition supports the theories of Simamora and Rambe (2024) and Sulistyowati (2024), which State that the Whole Word Method can foster students' confidence by helping them understand the meaning of words in a visual context rather than merely memorizing symbols. Thus, the scrapbook functions not only as a visual aid but also as a constructive medium for students to build an understanding of meaning naturally.

Practicality testing showed that the scrapbook media obtained an average score of 93.7%, categorized as "very practical." Teachers reported that the media was easy to use, required no additional tools, and could be applied in various classroom settings. Activities in the scrapbook were considered flexible, as they could be adapted for individual or small group learning. Meanwhile, students felt that the media helped them recognize words through enjoyable and non-monotonous activities. These results are consistent with Fahmiyah et al. (2025), who explained that activity-based creative media can enhance students' independence and emotional engagement in early Reading learning. Conceptually, these results are also supported by Eshetu (2015), who argued that media practicality is not only measured by ease of use but also by its suitability with learners' characteristics and the learning context.

The effectiveness of the scrapbook media was tested through pre-test and posttest results of students' early Reading skills. The test included three leading indicators: letter recognition, syllable formation, and simple word comprehension. Comparison of the scores showed a significant improvement after using the Whole Word Method-based scrapbook media, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Effectiveness Test Results of Scrapbook Media on Early Reading Skills

Assessment Aspect	Pre-test Average Score	Posttest Average Score	Improvement	N-Gain Category
Letter recognition	65.2	88.6	23.4	Medium–High
Syllable formation	62.4	85.8	23.4	Medium–High
Simple word comprehension	63.0	87.2	24.2	Medium–High
Overall average	63.5	87.2	23.7	Medium–High (0.65)

The analysis results indicate that all aspects of Reading skills improved significantly, with an average N-Gain of 0.65, placing it in the medium–high category. The most notable improvement occurred in word recognition, where students found it easier to connect written symbols to meaning through image associations. This demonstrates the effectiveness of implementing the Whole Word Method in scrapbook media, as students learn to recognize words as wholes through multisensory experiences. These findings align with Metsämuuronen and Räsänen (2018), who State that combining iconic (image) and symbolic (word) representations in learning activities can strengthen the process of meaning construction. Thus, the integration of method and media in this study has a tangible impact on improving students' early Reading skills.

Although this analysis shows a significant improvement, it should still be interpreted with caution due to the limited research context. Some researchers argue that positive results from small-scale tests do not necessarily translate into effectiveness in larger or more diverse classroom settings. Therefore, further development, including trials with different populations or the integration of phonics and the Whole Word method, is recommended to test the consistency of the results.

During implementation, changes in students' learning behavior were evident. At the beginning of the lessons, some students showed confusion in linking letters to word sounds. However, after two sessions using the scrapbook, they began to recognize letter patterns and understand the relationship between text and images. Teachers noted an increase in students' concentration, participation, and curiosity during Reading activities. Children appeared excited to open each page of the scrapbook and eagerly read the words presented visually. These observations indicate that the scrapbook media successfully fostered students' intrinsic motivation to learn Reading. This aligns with Reeve's (2012) Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that meaningful learning experiences that provide students with a sense of control over their learning activities can enhance intrinsic motivation.

Teachers also provided positive reflections on the use of the scrapbook in early Reading instruction. In post-implementation interviews, teachers stated that the scrapbook not only

facilitated the introduction of letters and words but also enriched the classroom's teaching methods. Teachers found it helpful because the media presented a systematic and thematic sequence of activities, simplifying daily lesson planning. Additionally, activities within the scrapbook, such as tracing letters and matching images, supported students with visual and kinesthetic learning styles. This supports Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, as described by Yavich and Rotnitsky (2020), which emphasizes the importance of adapting teaching approaches to diverse student intelligences. Through the scrapbook, teachers can accommodate students' visual-spatial and kinesthetic intelligences while simultaneously reinforcing their linguistic intelligence.

The results of this study are also consistent with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of visual media and the global Reading method in early literacy instruction. For instance, a study by Pratiwi (2020) found that implementing the Whole Word Method with illustrated media increased word recognition skills by 35% among lower-grade students. Meanwhile, research by Putra (2025) indicated that visual media focused on simple motor activities could accelerate letter and vocabulary recognition. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on digital media or word cards, this study integrates method and media in the form of a physical, interactive, and contextual scrapbook. Thus, the findings of this study expand the understanding of effective early Reading strategies for young children through meaningful yet straightforward creative media.

Although the results demonstrate the effectiveness and practicality of the scrapbook media, several limitations should be considered. First, the effectiveness test was conducted on a limited scale with a relatively small number of respondents, so generalization to a larger population requires further study. Second, this research focused on improving early Reading skills and did not cover other aspects such as Reading fluency or comprehension of more complex texts. Third, as the media is physical, its durability and long-term practicality need further examination. However, these limitations also open opportunities for future research, such as developing an interactive digital scrapbook or integrating it with audiovisual media to enrich the early Reading learning experience.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the development of scrapbook media based on the Whole Word Method is effective, valid, and practical for improving early Reading skills of elementary school students. The media achieved a validity score of 91.4%, categorized as very valid; a practicality score of 93.7%, categorized as highly practical; and effectiveness, shown by an increase in the average score from 63.5 to 87.2, with an N-Gain of 0.65 (medium–high category).

The use of the scrapbook has been proven to enhance student engagement, motivation, and understanding of meaning in Reading activities through visual-based learning and simple motor activities. With a thematic, interactive design tailored to children's developmental characteristics, this media not only strengthens early literacy skills but also supports the implementation of contextual, student-centered learning in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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