IMPROVING CHILDREN'S READING MOTIVATION AND SKILLS THROUGH READ ALOUD: A MIXED-METHOD STUDY IN ORPHANAGE CONTEXT

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A B S T R A C T

Generally speaking, children's reading motivation and skills are low, notably those in orphanages requiring solution, one of which is through reading activities applying read-aloud method. Most studies on the read-aloud method were qualitative. This study attempted to address the gap by employing a mixed-methods design with 10 foster children from an orphanage chosen using purposive sampling technique. Observations, tests, and interviews were used to collect the data. Quantitative data from observations and tests were statistically analyzed and reported in frequency and percentage to determine the difference in the number of children who improved following the program. Additionally, interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative data on children's and orphanages' perspectives of the program and its impacts, and the results were assessed using qualitative data analysis including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed concurrently. They were then merged and interpreted through a side-by-side comparison approach. Finally, convergence or divergence between the two sources of data was determined. The findings show that quantitative and qualitative data confirm each other, demonstrating that the read-aloud method improved children's reading motivation by significantly increasing the length of time for reading and the number of books read, as well as a slight increase in children's reading comprehension and confidence. In addition, the children's reading fluency improved substantially, while their reading accuracy and clarity improved slightly. Future research should focus on areas that need the most improvement and entail a larger sample size. Additionally, reading assistance for foster children is always recommended.

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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital platforms has a negative impact on children's concentration span and causes problems focusing, even when reading (Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023). Reading is associated with motivation, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as knowledge and skills, and motivation properly reflects a child's desire to read (Pratiwi, 2021). They may be

interested in reading for pleasure, but they are not dedicated and may not see the value of hard work in reading, nor do they have confidence in their skills in reading (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Those who lack reading motivation read less than those who are intrinsically motivated, who read more, understand better, and achieve greater academic accomplishment (Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023). The average Indonesian, based on the National Library Research, only reads books three to four times each week with thirty (30) to fifty-nine (59) minutes of total reading time in a day (Liana Mumrikoh et al., 2023). A lack of reading motivation will be a significant obstacle in children's education (Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023).

Reading motivation and skill issues occur everywhere, including orphanages. Orphanages are homes for children who do not live with their families for reasons, one of which is their financial inability to fulfill and support the continuation of their lives (Safitri & Siregar, 2022). There are currently 153 million orphans around the world, and if only orphans existed, it would be the ninth most populous country (Rabiev, 2023). Children in orphanages, who we call foster children, have limited access to appealing literature; therefore, their reading motivation is poor (Deviyanti, 2021). Orphanage administrators are usually limited in their ability to provide reading materials, leading to children not being accustomed to participating in literacy programs (Habiburrahman & Fatmawati, 2020). Furthermore, the primary issues encountered include foster children's lack of awareness and motivation to read books (Fahmi et al., 2021) and the absence of support for reading activities (Wedasuwari et al., 2021).

Reading motivation can be defined as enjoyment of a book, enthusiasm for an author, or delight in up-to-date information (Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023). There is a strong link between reading motivation and reading over an extended period of time (Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023; Ro & Kim, 2022). Furthermore, it has a significant impact on the reading frequency and comprehension (Naeghel & Keer, 2013). Reading motivation is typically classified as intrinsic, which includes increased self-esteem and reading skills confidence, and extrinsic, which includes grades and praise from instructors or parents (Gao, 2023).

To increase children's reading motivation, relevant and entertaining strategies must be used (Gunawati et al., 2022). Sofyan et al., (2021) said that one strategy for enhancing students' motivation and reading skills is to read aloud, which also helps students understand the meaning of the text, learn new vocabulary, enhance pronunciation and confidence, and enjoy the teaching and learning process. Additionally, it motivates kids to read and gradually improves their reading comprehension, which raises their literacy level (Sajid & Kassim, 2019). When it comes to reading skills, reading aloud increase fluency, accuracy, and self-confidence (Sopiah & Gaffar, 2023). Reading aloud enables students to love and appreciate reading, as well as motivates and stimulates them to read, and a lack of reading fluency and pronunciation results from a lack of reading aloud (Badawi et al., 2021). Children who read aloud get the confidence to speak loudly in front of their teachers and peers (Sary & Indah, 2023). Furthermore, reading aloud has an effect on a child's capacity to comprehend the content (Panjaitan et al., 2023). Unfortunately, a lot of children had no experience reading aloud with their parents or teachers (Mardhiah et al., 2022; Novianti & Abdurahman, 2019).

Several studies have investigated reading motivation and the impact of the read-aloud method. Gao (2023) explored the types of reading motivation including both intrinsic and extrinsic. His study, however, did not investigate the areas of motivation and engagement across age group differences, the relationship between the school type, family socioeconomic conditions, and reading motivation of the children. Further, he suggested that future research focus on programs facilitating long-term reading motivation. On the other side, research on the read-aloud method has been conducted. A qualitative study (Kamila & Ritonga, 2021) involving interviews, questionnaires, and documentation discovered that reading aloud can

boost children's reading motivation. Reading aloud is useful to have children actively engage, understand the reading content, and be able to tell what is read (Fara & Fara, 2023). Reading aloud can increase students' reading comprehension (Amanda & Suryaman, 2022; Hojeij, 2023). Aside from comprehension, the reading aloud method used in a classroom action research with a qualitative approach by Rahayu & Mustadi (2022) discovered that children's fluency in terms of clear intonation, proper pronunciation, and punctuation mark placement improved. A pre-experimental quantitative study employing a test and a questionnaire (Malau et al., 2022) showed that reading aloud had a significant impact on developing children's reading habits.

Existing studies were mostly conducted separately for qualitative and quantitative aspects. The qualitative ones collect and analyze data using interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and post-activity reflections. On the other side, the quantitative ones obtained the data through tests and questionnaires. Therefore, to complete the gaps, this study tried to investigate further results by combining the two approaches. Furthermore, due to the absence of observation in prior studies, this study applied observations to complete the data from tests and interviews.

This study aimed to improve children's reading motivation and reading skills and was conducted to answer the following questions: 1) How does the read-aloud method improve children's reading motivation? and 2) How does the read-aloud method improve children's reading skills?

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
This study applied a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014) through one-group experimental design.

Subject
This research was conducted in *Darul Hadlonah Putri* orphanage in Temanggung Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. One of the issues that the orphanage administrations had was that their learning support, particularly in reading, was only offered by a small number of caregivers. Indeed, school-age children, particularly those in elementary school, require assistance and attention with their reading skills. Some of them were still unable to read properly. Reading habituation and motivation are critical for them to be able to occupy their time with beneficial activities. Ten foster children from this orphanage participated in this research, chosen through purposive sampling technique. They are all in elementary school. Two students are in the second grade, five in the third, one in the fifth, and two in the sixth grade. Children in grade three have little desire as well as poor reading skills. One second-grader has enthusiasm and excellent reading skills. Children in grades five and six have strong reading skills but lack motivation.

Instruments
The data for this study were gathered by observations, tests, and interviews using observation sheets, test tools, and interview guidelines. The instruments were created with the goal of emphasizing the enhanced features of reading motivation and skills mentioned in previous studies, which became the criteria to measure. They were then validated by experts. The observation sheets were used to assess the children's reading motivation by focusing on the length of time allotted to read, the enthusiasm in answering questions based on the book read, the willingness to read aloud to peers, and the number of books read during independent reading sessions. The reading aloud test examined the reading skills of children in terms of accuracy, fluency, and clarity. The interview guidelines were set through some questions in

order to obtain qualitative data on the children's and orphanage administrators' perceptions of the children's reading motivation and skills before and after treatment, which in turn confirmed the convergence or divergence of the quantitative data obtained from the observations and tests.

Data Analysis

Data were collected and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. To confirm their validity, triangulation was used across several data collection methods. The data were collected through observations, tests, and interviews. Quantitative data collected through observations and read-aloud tests was statistically analyzed and provided as a frequency and percentage. They were to compare the number of children who improved in four characteristics of reading motivation and three aspects of reading skills before and after treatment. In order to supplement the findings of the observations and tests, interviews were performed to collect qualitative data on children's and orphanages' perceptions of the program and its impacts. With the use of research questions, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, evaluated, and separated into many themes and subthemes which were classified and coded. To construct a coding scheme relating to the research questions, key words from the responses were highlighted. The interview results were analyzed using qualitative data analysis (Miles et al., 2019), which included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed concurrently. They were also merged and analyzed utilizing a side-by-side comparison procedure, with quantitative data collected and examined first, followed by qualitative data. The final stage was determining whether there was convergence or divergence between the two sources of data.

By stating the names of research subjects and informants using their initials, all data reported in this study were guaranteed to be anonymous and confidential. It was intended to encourage them to provide sincere reflections throughout the process of the research. Prior to involving the research subjects, permission was acquired from the orphanage administrators at all stages of the investigation. The orphanage administrators and caregivers were requested to read, complete, and sign a consent form indicating both voluntary willingness and authorization to include foster children in the study and retaining the right to withdraw at any time throughout the research. The participation of children in research and subsequent stages of data gathering is also voluntary.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings

After analyzing the data obtained from observations, tests, and interviews, the following findings were presented.

1. **Children's reading motivation improvement through reading aloud**
   The Observation Results

   Observations were made by observing four aspects during each meeting. They include 1) the time effectively allocated by the children to participating in the reading activity; 2) the children's comprehension of the reading content as evidenced by their ability to answer questions; 3) their willingness to read aloud for friends; and 4) the number of books they read during the prescribed time for independent reading (30 minutes).

The number of children allocating the time effectively

The reading activity lasted 90 minutes in total. In determining the effective allotted time spent by the children engaging in the program, four categories were used. They are as follows: "very good" (75–90 minutes), "good" (60–75 minutes), "fair" (45–60 minutes), and "need motivation" (0–45 minutes). The number of children allocated to each type of time is shown in the table 1.

Table 1
The Number of Children Allocating the Time Effectively

No	Time	Category	Before Treatment		After Treatment	
			F*	%	F*	%
1.	75 – 90	Very Good	2	20	70	70
2.	60 – 75	Good	2	20	2	20
3.	45 – 60	Fair	6	60	1	10
4.	0 – 45	Need motivation	0	0	0	0
		Total Children	10		10	

*Frequency

The proportion of children who effectively spent 75–90 minutes of serious attention or who are in the "very good" category increased by 50% from 20% before the treatment to 70% after the treatment. Those who spent 60–75 minutes ("good") were steady, accounting for 20% of participants. On the other side, those who committed around 45–60 minutes ("fair") declined from time to time, from 60% to 10% in the last meeting. No one falls into "need motivation" category in this aspect.

The number of children that properly answer questions showing their comprehension on the reading content

Each read-aloud session was followed by eight questions about the reading content. The observation was carried out to determine the total number of students who properly answered the questions. There were five categories: "very good" (answered 7-8 questions), "good" (5-6 questions), "fair" (3-4 questions), "need motivation" (1-2 questions), and "low comprehension" (0 questions). The number of children who were able to answer questions on the reading topic can be seen in table 2.

Table 2
The Number of Children Answering Questions Correctly

No	Correct Answers	Category	Before Treatment		After Treatment	
			F*	%	F*	%
1.	7 – 8	Very Good	0	0	0	0
2.	5 – 6	Good	0	0	0	0
3.	3 – 4	Fair	4	40	5	50
4.	1 – 2	Need motivation	1	10	3	30
5.	0	Low Comprehension	5	50	2	20
		Total Children	10		10	

Overall, it was discovered that no one was able to answer all (8) or even 75% of the questions (5-6). In contrast, the children scored "fair" (answer 3-4 questions), "need motivation" (answer 1-2 questions), and "low comprehension" (no questions answered). It implies they could only answer no more than four questions correctly. The percentage of children in "fair" group changed somewhat, rising from 40% previously to 50% after

the treatment. The overall number of children in the category of "need motivation" increased from 10% to 30%. Eventually, it was reduced from 50% to 20% for the "low comprehension" category.

The number of children feeling confident to read aloud to their peers

The research subjects were given opportunities to read aloud pictured-story book to their friends, and this session was monitored to identify those who willingly accepted this chance. It was then investigated if they demonstrated confidence for willingly reading aloud, were willing to read aloud for friends when instructed, were willing to read aloud after being motivated, or refused the opportunity. The number of children who accepted the opportunity to read aloud to their peers is depicted in table 3.

Table 3
The Number of Children Feeling Confident to Read Loud for Friends

No	Correct Answers	Category	Before Treatment		After Treatment	
			F*	%	F*	%
1.	Willing to volunteer	Very Good	0	0	1	10
2.	Willing when appointed	Good	1	1	3	30
3.	Willing but should be motivated firstly	Fair	0	0	4	40
4.	Not Willing	Need motivation	9	90	2	20
		Total Children	10		10	

*Frequency

Table 3 shows that the children's confidence to read aloud to friends was low. The number of "very good" category indicating voluntary willingness grew slightly from no one to 1 (10%), whereas the number of "good" category showing willingness when appointed climbed slightly from 10% to 30% after the treatment. Next, "fair" category (willing but should be motivated initially) began with no one and increased 40% at the end. Conversely, for "need motivation" or "not willing" categories was represented by 90% at the beginning to 20% after the treatment.

The number of books read by children during their independent reading session

The students were given 30 minutes of independent reading time from the total time for reading aloud activities in each meeting, which was 90 minutes. The books were restricted to around 25 pages and included vivid illustrations. In other words, the books that were read by the research subjects are picture-books. There are four categories to be observed, including "very good" for those who could read more than 7 books, "good" (read 5-7 books), "fair" (read 2-4 books), and "need motivation" (read fewer than 2 books).

Table 4
The Number of Books Read by the Children in 30 Minutes

			Before Treatment		After Treatment	
No	Correct Answers	Category	F*	%	F*	%
1.	More than 7 books	Very Good	0	0	10	100
2.	5 – 7 books	Good	1	1	0	0
3.	2 – 4 books	Fair	6	60	0	0
4.	Less than 2 books	Need motivation	3	30	0	0
		Total Children	10		10	

*Frequency

Table 4 shows that the number of books read during the independent reading session has increased significantly. For example, children who read more than 7 books improved from no one at the beginning to 100% after the treatment. This improvement increased from the prior treatment which 10 % of the children belonged to "good" category who read 5 – 7 books, as well as 2 – 4 books and less than 2 books were read by 60% and 30%, respectively.

2. Children's reading skills improvement through reading aloud.
The Test Results

The following findings were acquired through tests which were designed to assess the children's skills to read aloud in three areas: accuracy, fluency, and clarity. Each component is scored on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest with the label "needs work", 2 being "fair", 3 being "good", and 4 being "very good". The pre-test and post-test results are as follows:

The number of children that attained accuracy improvement

Table 5
The Number of the Children Achieved Accuracy Improvement

		Before Treatment		After Treatment	
No	Category	F*	%	F*	%
1.	Very Good	1	10	3	30
2.	Good	5	50	5	50
3.	Fair	2	20	1	10
4.	Need Work	2	20	1	10
	Total Children	10		10	

*Frequency

According to the data in table 5, before the read-aloud method was adopted, the children's accuracy skills was represented by 10% of the participants in "very good" category, 50% in "good", 20% in "fair", and 20% in "need work" category. After the treatment, 30% of the participants improved in "very good" category, while the remaining 50% increased in "good" category, and 10% improved in "fair" and "need work" categories. It may be stated that, while not statistically significant, the read-aloud method has a favourable influence on enhancing children's accuracy. This is seen by the 30% rise in the percentage of children classified as "very good" over prior treatment.

The number of the children achieved fluency improvement

Table 6
The Number of the Children Achieved Fluency Improvement

No	Category	Before Treatment		After Treatment	
		F*	%	F*	%
1.	Very Good	1	10	8	80
2.	Good	5	50	2	20
3.	Fair	2	20	0	0
4.	Need Work	2	20	0	0
	Total Children	10		10	

*Frequency

According to the findings shown in table 6, children's reading fluency increased significantly and consistently. This is demonstrated by the fact that the number of children in "very good" category climbed considerably after the treatment, reaching 80% from 10% at the beginning. Furthermore, there were no more students in categories of "need work" and "fair". As a result, it can be stated that the read-aloud method can be used to improve children's skills to read fluently.

The number of the children achieved clarity improvement

Table 7
The Number of the Children Achieved Clarity Improvement

No	Category	Before Treatment		After Treatment	
		F*	%	F*	%
1.	Very Good	0	0	3	30
2.	Good	7	70	5	50
3.	Fair	10	10	2	20
4.	Need Work	2	20	0	0
	Total Children	10		10	

*Frequency

Based on the table 7, the number of children who read with clarity of voice improved somewhat but not significantly. In this situation, 30% of them obtained "very good" after the treatment. 50% of children received "good", which declined 20% from the situation before the treatment, while the remaining 20% received "fair", which improved 10% compared to the beginning. There were no more children in "need work" category at the final meeting, a decrease from prior the treatment, which were 20%.

Interview Results

Interviews with the participant representatives totalling 5 children and the orphanage administrators were undertaken to support the findings of observations and tests.

Table 8
The Interview Results

Reading Activities	Reading Motivation	Reading Skills
"Nothing like this has ever been done here before" (Interview transcript 2: NI)	"I'm excited to be a part of the program." "We used to read books on prophets' stories, but today we have more options" (Interview transcript 4: FA).	"I can read faster than before. So I can read more fluently. We should read the book out loud here" (Interview transcript 1: AM)
"This is good. The books are many and varied" (Interview transcript 5: RA)	"The books are various, colourful, and entertaining. I enjoy the teacher's read aloud session and I can understand little about the story" (Interview transcript 1: AM).	"I usually read silently. Now that I'm reading aloud, my voice must be clear. When we made a mistake, it was corrected, and we should repeat the phrases" (Interview transcript 2: NI)
"I believe it is very good because we, as administrators or seniors in this orphanage, do not always have time to guide the children, particularly in reading. They tend to undertake activities on their own, and there was no explicit reading instruction. Previously, we had never had a visit to undertake this type of activity; hopefully, it will be done again next time" (Interview transcript 6: PP).	"I used to read at night when I wanted to" "Now I must devote time to reading. I think it is good" (Interview transcript 5: RA)	"My teacher at school told me yesterday that I became more fluent in reading" (Interview 3 transcript: RE)
	"When there is no activity, we easily get bored" "We can finally do something useful now" (Interview transcript 2: NI).	"More reading makes me more fluent" (Interview transcript 5: FA).
	"I want to read more to become fluent" "I could not answer all the questions given by the teacher" (Interview transcript 3: RE)	"When I read more books and do it loudly, I can read faster and more fluently" (Interview transcript 5: RA)
	"I think it's very motivating" "As may be observed on the day of the program, they passionately prepared themselves" (Interview transcript 6: PP)	"I can help my younger sisters here" (Interview transcript 4: RA)
		"Recently, RE stated that her teacher informed her that RE appeared to be beginning to read fluently." Because it has become a habit in these few meetings, it appears that the children have grown more organized in their reading, and maybe they will become more fluent and passionate readers" (Transcript of interview 6: PP)". (Interview 6 transcript: PP)

The interviews revealed that reading activities utilizing the read-aloud method were the first at the *Darul Hadlonah Putri* orphanage. The activities also benefited the children, who previously had no reading supports. The findings of the interviews confirmed the findings of the observations and tests. The reading activities through read aloud enhanced the children's motivation, as seen by their enthusiasm to attend each reading activity meeting, spend more time reading, and read more books. Another benefit noted by participants and orphanage administrators is that read-aloud activities help

improve reading skills. Some children's reading fluency improved. Reading aloud to children taught them how to read in a loud and clear voice.

Discussion

The study found that foster children's reading motivation improved. The children's willingness to spend more time reading and the number of books read by the children were recognized as two aspects that could be improved by the read-aloud method. The majority of foster children who participated in the study (70%) devoted more than 75 minutes of the 90-minute meeting time to reading activities, accounting for 83% of the total time in each meeting (90 minutes). It grew by 50% as compared to the first meeting. In terms of the number of books successfully read during independent reading (30 minutes), the number of children who could read more books increased. During the first meeting, the majority of the children (60%) could only read fewer than four books, one (10%) read one book, and three children read less than two books. Following the treatment, all of the children (100%) were able to read more than seven novels (which belonged to the "very good" category). These findings contradicted data from the National Library Research findings (quoted in Liana Mumrikoh et al, 2023) that the average Indonesian reads three or four times a week for no more than 60 minutes each day, even if the number of books read was not specified).

Another advantage of reading aloud is that it improves children's reading skills in terms of fluency, accuracy, and clarity. This study discovered that reading aloud significantly and consistently improves fluency without greatly increasing the number of children making progress on accuracy and clarity. The results showed that the number of children who can read more rapidly and fluently ("very good") increased dramatically after the treatment, reaching 80% compared to 10% before the treatment. It is consistent with prior research (Fara & Fara, 2023; Rahayu & Mustadi, 2022; Sofyan et al., 2021; Sopiah & Gaffar, 2023) and supports the notion of Badawi et al. (2021) that a lack of reading fluency is caused by a lack of reading aloud. In terms of accuracy, the improvement achieved a low percentage of only 20% of the number of children who improved in both "very good" and "good" categories over prior treatment. In other words, while not statistically significant, reading aloud has a positive effect on children's accuracy. It is similar to the findings of Rahayu & Mustadi (2022) and Sopiah & Gaffar (2023). However, the level of improvement is not too high. Furthermore, by reading aloud, the number of children who read with clarity of voice increased slightly, but not drastically. In this case, 30% of them received "very good" after the treatment, a 20% improvement over before the treatment. In addition, there were no more children in "need work" category at the final meeting, a decrease from 20% of the children before treatment. This result is consistent with Rahayu & Mustadi (2022), with the exception of the significance level.

On the other hand, some aspects investigated in this study were only slightly improved by the use of the read-aloud method. They include children's low comprehension, which was demonstrated by their inability to answer most topic-related questions and their lack of confidence while reading aloud to their peers. Even at the end of the meeting following the treatment, the foster children could only answer four (50%) of the questions after being prompted and stimulated by some cues. This finding is in line with earlier studies (Amanda & Suryaman, 2022; Fara & Fara, 2023; Panjaitan et al., 2023; Sajid & Kassim, 2019), but it differs from past studies (Amanda & Suryaman, 2022; Hojeij, 2023) revealing that children's understanding increased in terms of their willingness to answer questions regarding the reading content. Another point to note is that children's motivation to read aloud to friends was low, with just a small percentage of those participated reading aloud to friends after being persuaded to do so. This contradicts the findings of others Cambria & Guthrie (2010)

as well as Sary & Indah (2023)who discovered that reading aloud gives children the confidence to speak loudly in front of their teachers and peers (Sary & Indah, 2023)

The results of the interviews supported the results of the observations and tests. Therefore, the findings support each other in suggesting that reading aloud to children enhances their reading motivation and skills. Overall, the findings are also consistent with previous research (Kamila & Ritonga, 2021; Malau et al., 2022; Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Children with limited access to literacy, such as those who are in orphanages, should be provided with reading facilities and activities to help them develop not just their motivation but also their reading skills. The read-aloud method has proven to increase foster children's reading motivation in terms of spending more time reading and reading more books during independent reading sessions. It was also obvious from the growth in the number of foster children executing these two aspects from before to after the treatment. Read aloud, on the other hand, had only little effect on the children's comprehension of the book, as seen by their inability to answer the majority of questions about the reading content. Additionally, in terms of their confidence to loudly read books to their friends, the read-aloud method had only little meaningful effect. They, on the other hand, must first be motivated before reading the book to their peers. Furthermore, the read aloud method has successfully improved children's reading fluency. They could read more quickly and fluently. Conversely, the read-aloud method improved reading skills in accuracy and clarity in a limited number of children. Given the benefits of reading aloud, it is vital that all parties provide continuous assistance in children's reading activities. Further, due to the small sample size in this study and the lack of specific-age children, the findings of this research may require consideration for generalization. Furthermore, because the study employed a one-group experimental design, there was no control group. Future research should look into a larger sample size as well as involving another group as a control group to compare the treatment's results across different research subjects.

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