The Role Of The School Lıteracy Envıronment In Enhancıng The Readıng Interest

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of the school literacy environment in fostering students' reading interest at the sixth grade of SD IT Insan Mulya Kotagajah, as well as to identify its supporting and inhibiting factors. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving 30 sixth-grade students, three teachers, and the school principal as research subjects. The findings reveal that the literacy environment was developed through classroom reading corners, mini libraries, a "15 minutes reading before class" program, and scheduled literacy competitions. These activities effectively improved students' reading interest, as indicated by increased frequency of book borrowing, active participation in literacy events, and greater diversity in book choices. Supporting factors include active teacher and principal involvement, parental encouragement, and adequate literacy facilities, while inhibiting factors involve inconsistency in students' reading habits and limited book collections aligned with their interests. Development suggestions include expanding the variety of books, integrating digital reading resources, and implementing structured reading routines to maintain student engagement. Overall, the school literacy environment plays a strategic role in enhancing reading interest and contributes to building a sustainable literacy culture.

Keywords: *Literacy environment, Reading interest, Elementary students*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran lingkungan literasi sekolah dalam meningkatkan minat baca siswa kelas VI SD IT Insan Mulya Kotagajah, serta mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat pelaksanaannya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan studi dokumentasi, melibatkan 30 siswa kelas VI, tiga guru, dan kepala sekolah sebagai subjek penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan literasi sekolah dikembangkan melalui sudut baca kelas, perpustakaan mini, kegiatan membaca 15 menit sebelum pelajaran, serta lomba literasi yang terjadwal. Kegiatan ini terbukti efektif meningkatkan minat baca siswa, terlihat dari meningkatnya frekuensi peminjaman buku, keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam kegiatan literasi, serta bertambahnya variasi buku yang dibaca. Faktor pendukung mencakup keterlibatan guru dan kepala sekolah, dukungan orang tua, serta fasilitas literasi yang memadai, sedangkan faktor penghambat meliputi kurangnya konsistensi sebagian siswa dalam menjaga kebiasaan membaca dan keterbatasan koleksi buku sesuai minat mereka. Saran pengembangan diarahkan pada perluasan variasi buku, integrasi sumber literasi digital, dan penerapan rutinitas membaca yang terstruktur untuk menjaga keterlibatan siswa. Secara keseluruhan, lingkungan literasi

sekolah berperan strategis dalam meningkatkan minat baca siswa dan membangun budaya literasi yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Lingkungan literasi, Minat baca, Siswa sekolah dasar

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INTRODUCTION

Elementary education plays a crucial role in building the foundation of students' knowledge, skills, and character. One fundamental aspect that must not be overlooked is literacy ability. Literacy, particularly reading literacy, serves as the key for students to comprehend information, develop critical thinking skills, and foster a love of learning (Dewi et al., 2023; Halimah et al., 2024). Therefore, schools as formal educational institutions are required to create a conducive environment to nurture reading interest from an early age.

The school literacy environment encompasses various aspects, ranging from the provision of physical facilities such as libraries, reading corners, and book collections, to the implementation of structured reading activities. According to UNESCO (2023), a literacy culture can only develop when students are accustomed to repeated interactions with books, both inside and outside the classroom. In this context, teachers play a vital role as facilitators, motivators, and role models in cultivating consistent reading habits among students.

However, Indonesia faces significant challenges in the area of literacy. Based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 data, Indonesia ranked 70th out of 80 countries with a reading literacy score of 359, placing it among the bottom 10 globally (Detikcom). In addition, Indonesia's Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM) in 2023 was recorded at 68.19, indicating that the development of literacy in society remains at a moderate level (GoodStats Data). Furthermore, according to UNESCO, reading interest among Indonesians is very low, with only 0.001% of every 1,000 people considered active readers (RRI).

SD IT Insan Mulya Kotagajah has made efforts to integrate literacy programs into daily school activities, including the "15 minutes reading before lessons" program, literacy competitions, and the establishment of reading corners in each classroom. Nevertheless, challenges persist, such as low interest among some students in non-academic reading materials, limited book collections, and the need to strengthen a more sustainable reading culture.

This study is essential to explore the extent to which the school literacy environment contributes to enhancing the reading interest of sixth-grade students, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence it. The novelty of this research lies in its in-depth descriptive qualitative approach within a local school context, which can provide new insights into the development of literacy culture at the elementary school level.

METHODS

Type and Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design, which is considered appropriate for exploring and describing social phenomena in their natural setting. According to Sugiyono (2020), qualitative descriptive research seeks to reveal the meaning behind behaviors, interactions, and experiences without manipulating or controlling variables. Instead of testing hypotheses, this research aimed to provide a rich, detailed, and holistic account of the literacy environment in the school context. The focus of this research was directed at understanding

how the literacy environment at SD IT Insan Mulya Kotagajah contributes to fostering and enhancing the reading interest of sixth-grade students, as well as identifying its supporting and inhibiting factors. By adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, the researcher was able to uncover the dynamics of literacy activities, the role of different stakeholders in promoting literacy, and the lived experiences of students in engaging with various literacy facilities provided by the school.

Data and Data Sources

The data in this research consisted of both primary and secondary sources:

1. Primary Data Sources

   Sixth-grade students (30 in total): They were the main subjects of the study, as the research aimed to capture their interest, involvement, and experiences in school literacy activities. The number of 30 students was chosen because it represents the entire sixth-grade cohort, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the target group. This sample size was also manageable for qualitative data collection and allowed for sufficient depth in the analysis. The School Principal: As the policymaker, the principal played a central role in designing, initiating, and overseeing the implementation of literacy programs at the school. The Sixth-grade Teacher: Functioned as the direct implementer who facilitated literacy practices within the classroom and guided students' engagement. The School Librarian: Managed literacy facilities, such as the mini library, and supported students in accessing and utilizing reading materials. Five purposively selected students: These were chosen based on the intensity of their participation in literacy activities (high, medium, and low levels). The purposive sampling ensured variation in perspectives and provided a deeper understanding of both supporting and inhibiting factors in literacy engagement.

2. Secondary Data Sources

   Supporting data were drawn from a variety of school records and documents, including; Book borrowing records from the mini library, Literacy activity schedules, Photo documentation of literacy events, Official reports on literacy programs. These multiple sources provided a comprehensive and triangulated perspective on the research problem.

Data Collection Technique

To obtain credible and in-depth findings, the study employed three complementary techniques:

1. Participant Observation

   The researcher directly observed literacy-related activities, including the "15 minutes reading before lessons" program, the borrowing process in the mini library, and students' use of classroom reading corners. Observations also focused on; The number of students actively engaged in reading, The types of books most frequently selected, Patterns of interaction between students and teachers during literacy activities. An observation sheet was developed as an instrument, containing indicators of student engagement, teacher facilitation, use of literacy facilities, and peer interaction. Field notes were also maintained to capture contextual and reflective aspects.

2. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, the sixth-grade teacher, the librarian, and five selected students. The flexible format allowed for the exploration of:; Stakeholders' perceptions of literacy programs, Students' motivations and challenges in reading, Supporting and inhibiting factors in literacy practices, Perceived impacts of literacy activities on reading interest and learning behavior. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions and probing prompts was used to ensure consistency across informants while allowing flexibility for deeper exploration. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3. Documentation Study

   To strengthen and validate data from observations and interviews, the researcher analyzed official school documents, including book borrowing logs, literacy schedules, photographic evidence, and program reports. This documentary analysis not only provided factual evidence but also supported the triangulation process.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical standards in qualitative inquiry. Prior to data collection, formal approval was obtained from the school principal. Written informed consent was secured from adult participants, and parental consent was obtained for students. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed by using pseudonyms and secure data storage.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (2014), which involves three main stages:

1. Data-Reduction

   The researcher carefully selected, categorized, and summarized the most relevant data from observations, interviews, and documents. Transcripts from interviews were subjected to open coding to identify meaningful units, followed by axial coding to group codes into categories, and selective coding to generate broader themes related to supporting and inhibiting factors in the literacy environment.

2. Data-Display

   Reduced data were presented in structured forms, including descriptive narratives, matrices, tables, and verbatim excerpts from interviews. These displays facilitated clearer identification of relationships and patterns across data categories.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

   The researcher identified recurring patterns, relationships, and emerging themes from the displayed data. To ensure trustworthiness, multiple strategies were employed; Member-checking: Preliminary findings were shared with participants to verify accuracy and authenticity. Peer debriefing; Colleagues were consulted to review coding decisions and interpretations, reducing researcher bias.Audit trail: A systematic record of research decisions, coding processes, and analytic steps was maintained for replicability. Through these measures, the conclusions were verified to faithfully represent the observed phenomena.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of the School Literacy Environment

The findings of this study reveal that SD IT Insan Mulya Kotagajah has systematically developed a school literacy environment designed to foster students' reading interest. Observations showed that literacy-supportive facilities were present across different spaces in the school. For instance, every classroom was equipped with reading corners, which contained a small but diverse selection of books tailored to students' needs and interests. These corners provided easy access to reading materials, ensuring that literacy was integrated into daily classroom activities rather than being limited to the library.

In addition, the school established a mini library housing approximately 500 children's books, consisting of storybooks, illustrated encyclopedias, Islamic educational books, and motivational texts. Although modest in size, the library was well-utilized by students, with records showing regular borrowing activities. Furthermore, the school implemented a "15 minutes reading before class" program every morning. This routine successfully placed literacy at the forefront of school culture, creating consistent opportunities for students to engage with reading.

Beyond facilities, the school regularly organized literacy competitions, including storytelling, short story writing, poetry reading, and book review contests. These activities provided creative platforms for students to express themselves and deepen their engagement with reading materials.

The principal emphasized the importance of embedding literacy in everyday school life, stating: *"We want every classroom to become a literacy space, so children can read anytime, not only in the library."* This reflects the school's policy-driven commitment to integrating literacy across both formal and informal spaces.

Changes in Students' Reading Interest

Documentation from the library indicated a significant increase in book borrowing. The number of borrowed books rose from an average of **2 books per week** to **9 books per week** over the past three months, suggesting a steady growth of students' reading enthusiasm. To provide clarity, borrowing statistics are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Book Borrowing Statistics (Three-Month Period)

Month	Average Books Borrowed per Week	Most Popular Genres
Month 1	2	Comics, short stories
Month 2	6	Storybooks, illustrated encyclopedias
Month 3	9	Children's novels, Islamic books

Observations also showed diverse reading preferences. While children's storybooks were most popular, illustrated encyclopedias and Islamic motivational books were also in demand, reflecting both developmental needs and cultural-religious orientation. One student shared: *"I used to be lazy to read books other than comics, but since there was a short story writing competition, I started to enjoy reading children's novels so I could write better stories."* This illustrates the role of competitions in stimulating intrinsic motivation. These findings are consistent with Rahman & Dewi (2023), who reported that literacy competitions enhanced students' intrinsic motivation

in Indonesian schools, and Kim & Park (2022), who found that structured reading routines increased reading frequency and variety across Asian contexts.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Interviews with teachers, students, and the principal identified several supporting factors; Teacher Role Modeling – Teachers modeled reading behavior by participating in sessions alongside students, supporting Bandura's (1986) social learning theory. Principal's Support – The principal ensured sustainability by adding new book collections every semester and making literacy part of the school's strategic agenda. Parental Involvement – Many parents encouraged their children to read at home, extending literacy practices beyond the classroom. Student Enthusiasm for Competitions – Students viewed competitions as both enjoyable and rewarding, gaining extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Together, these factors created a collaborative literacy ecosystem. Similar findings were reported by Widodo (2022), who highlighted the synergy between schools and parents in reinforcing literacy habits.

Despite progress, several challenges persisted; Low Consistency Among Some Students – Certain students only read during mandatory programs, indicating limited intrinsic motivation. Limited Book Collection – The 500-book collection, while valuable, was insufficient to meet the varied interests of sixth graders, particularly in popular genres such as fantasy novels and science books. Time Constraints – A dense academic schedule restricted opportunities for voluntary reading. While the 15-minute program was effective, additional free time was needed. Similar issues were found in Nuraini et al. (2023), who noted that resource limitations and academic pressure remain obstacles in sustaining school-based literacy cultures.

This study contributes to literacy research by providing a localized analysis of an Islamic elementary school context, focusing not only on facilities but also on everyday practices such as reading routines, competitions, and parental involvement. Unlike prior research that often emphasizes large-scale assessments like PISA, this study highlights micro-level literacy practices that directly impact students' motivation. The novelty lies in demonstrating how routine-based literacy programs can be integrated with cultural-religious values, showing that contextualized approaches effectively foster reading interest. This has practical implications for schools with similar socio-cultural backgrounds, offering strategies for building a sustainable literacy culture through low-cost, replicable interventions.

The findings indicate that the school literacy environment significantly influences students' reading interest. The integration of physical facilities (reading corners, mini library), structured routines (15-minute reading program), and motivational activities (competitions) fostered a positive literacy culture. This result is consistent with Listyarini & Miyono (2023), who argue that consistent literacy practices embedded in school routines can successfully cultivate sustainable literacy habits. Similarly, Kim & Park (2022) found that structured daily reading activities increased both the frequency and diversity of students' book choices across Asian school contexts. These parallels suggest that the literacy model implemented at SD IT Insan Mulya Kotagajah aligns with broader empirical trends while also offering context-specific insights.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings are supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. In this study,

interactions with teachers, peers, and parents within literacy-rich environments facilitated the development of students' reading habits. Shared experiences—such as reading together, discussing books, and engaging in literacy competitions—created a community of practice where literacy was valued and celebrated. This resonates with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, highlighting that students learn positive reading behaviors through observation and modeling by teachers, parents, and peers.

Nevertheless, the study also identified challenges, including limited resources and constrained reading time. These findings echo Nuraini et al. (2023), who reported that insufficient book collections and dense academic schedules remain common obstacles to sustaining literacy culture in Indonesian elementary schools. Addressing these barriers requires innovative yet feasible strategies, such as; Establishing a digital library to expand access to diverse reading materials. While this offers flexibility and modern appeal, potential challenges include ensuring reliable internet access and providing digital literacy training for both students and teachers, Implementing a "bring your own book" policy to encourage book sharing among peers. However, this strategy may face inequality issues, as not all students have equal access to personal books, Integrating literacy activities across subjects to maximize reading opportunities without reducing academic time. The feasibility of this approach depends on teacher readiness and the availability of appropriate interdisciplinary materials.

By carefully addressing these challenges, schools can build a more inclusive and sustainable literacy ecosystem that nurtures lifelong reading habits. The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth qualitative exploration of literacy practices within a local Islamic elementary school context. Unlike large-scale quantitative assessments such as PISA, this research highlights everyday practices—reading corners, structured routines, and literacy competitions—that directly shape students' motivation to read. The integration of cultural-religious dimensions, such as the inclusion of Islamic books, further demonstrates how literacy development can be localized while still contributing to broader literacy goals.

Overall, the study contributes to literacy research by emphasizing the strategic role of the school literacy environment in enhancing reading interest and sustaining a culture of reading. It not only reinforces existing theoretical perspectives but also provides contextually relevant, practice-oriented insights that can inform educators, policymakers, and literacy advocates in Indonesia and beyond.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the literacy environment at SD IT Insan Mulya Kotagajah plays a significant role in fostering sixth-grade students' reading interest. Through classroom reading corners, a mini library, the "15 minutes reading before lessons" program, and literacy competitions, students showed increased reading frequency, greater diversity in reading materials, and more active participation in literacy activities. The program's success was supported by the active roles of teachers, strong commitment from the principal, parental involvement, and students' enthusiasm. However, obstacles such as limited book collections and inconsistent reading habits need to be addressed. Therefore, the school should expand book collections that align with students' interests and strengthen the reading culture through continuous innovation in literacy programs.

Beyond its practical findings, this study contributes to educational theory by reinforcing Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective and literacy studies that highlight the centrality of learning environments in shaping students' motivation and engagement. In practice, the results suggest that literacy development can be effectively supported when schools design sustainable literacy-rich environments and build collaborative partnerships. Practical recommendations include expanding digital resources to complement physical collections, fostering collaboration with local libraries to enrich access, and encouraging the use of educational technology platforms to engage students more interactively.

Furthermore, while this study provides valuable insights, its limitations—such as the focus on a single school context and limited grade level—indicate the need for further research. Future studies could investigate the long-term impact of literacy environments on academic achievement, compare different school settings, or explore the role of digital literacy integration. These directions will not only enrich theoretical understanding but also strengthen the scholarly and practical contributions of literacy research in elementary education.

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