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Teachers' Strategies for Fostering a Literacy Culture among Students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan

Sri Yuniarti [a,1,*], Suradi [b,2], Dina Putri Juni Astuti[c,3]

[*abc] Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu
[1]sriyuniarti0273@gmail.com; [2] suradi@iainbengkulu.ac.id; [3]dinaputri@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id
*Sri Yuniarti; sriyuniarti0273@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the strategies used by teachers to foster a reading literacy culture among students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The research subjects consisted of Indonesian language teachers and students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that teachers implemented several strategies to promote reading literacy culture, including habituation of reading activities before lessons, provision of reading corners in classrooms, utilization of school library facilities, integration of literacy activities into learning processes, and motivation through literacy appreciation programs. These strategies contributed positively to improving students' reading interest and literacy habits. Therefore, collaboration among teachers, schools, and parents is needed to strengthen literacy culture among students.

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Introduction

Reading literacy is not merely a mechanical skill involving the decoding or pronunciation of words; rather, it is a fundamental cognitive instrument that serves as a cornerstone of students' academic achievement and life skills in the modern era. Advanced reading ability extends beyond literal textual comprehension to encompass the intellectual capacity to extract meaning, reconstruct implicit information, stimulate critical and analytical thinking, and formulate solutions to complex real-life problems. Given its vital importance, the development of a reading culture cannot be achieved instantly or through sporadic activities. Instead, it must be consistently internalized from an early age through the establishment of a structured and sustainable academic ecosystem within educational institutions (Patiung & Lahaming, 2019). Weak literacy foundations among children often

contribute to persistent learning difficulties at subsequent educational levels, making the strengthening of reading literacy in junior high schools a crucial priority that should not be overlooked (Hidayat et al., 2021).

In the context of fostering a reading culture in schools, educational institutions function not merely as physical spaces but also as cultural ecosystems in which teachers occupy a central role as the primary drivers of literacy development. The role of teachers extends beyond their traditional function as transmitters of subject knowledge (transfer of knowledge), requiring them to become effective motivators who cultivate students' intrinsic interest in reading and capable facilitators who create text-rich classroom environments (print-rich environments). Teachers are expected to possess the pedagogical competence necessary to design, combine, and implement innovative literacy strategies so that students no longer perceive reading as a tedious instructional burden but rather as an enjoyable form of intellectual exploration. Teachers' flexibility and creativity in selecting and applying literacy methods in the classroom are important factors in increasing reading interest and accelerating the institutionalization of a reading culture throughout the school environment (Pradana, 2020).

The empirical conditions surrounding the development of a reading culture are reflected in the preliminary observations conducted at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan. As a junior high school in Bengkulu Selatan, the institution has demonstrated an institutional commitment to promoting reading habits among students through various literacy programs. Nevertheless, preliminary observations indicate that students' reading interest and levels of active engagement vary considerably across individuals and classrooms. These variations suggest a potential gap between the school's program design and the practical strategies implemented by teachers when addressing students' diverse psychological characteristics and learning needs in the classroom. Therefore, an in-depth investigation is necessary to identify instructional strategies that are precise, adaptive, and responsive to these differences in reading interest. Such strategies are expected to ensure that school literacy initiatives do not become mere administrative formalities but instead develop into a sustainable collective culture (Sutrianto et al., 2018).

The development of a sustainable literacy culture also requires teachers to consider the changing reading habits of students in the digital era. The widespread availability of digital devices and online information provides opportunities to expand access to reading materials, but it also presents challenges related to students' concentration, reading endurance, and ability to evaluate information critically. Students may encounter difficulties distinguishing reliable information from misleading content when they lack adequate literacy skills. Teachers therefore need to develop literacy strategies that combine conventional reading activities with the responsible use of digital resources. The selection of engaging texts, guided reading discussions, collaborative assignments, and activities that encourage students to evaluate information can help make literacy learning more relevant to their everyday experiences. Such approaches position reading not merely as an academic requirement but as an essential competence for navigating information, developing independent judgment, and participating effectively in contemporary society.

Another important aspect of fostering a literacy culture is the need to evaluate the implementation of teachers' strategies in relation to students' participation and learning experiences. The existence of reading programs, classroom reading corners, and school libraries does not automatically guarantee the development of consistent reading habits. The effectiveness of these initiatives depends on how teachers organize activities, respond to students' interests, provide appropriate guidance, and create opportunities for meaningful engagement with texts. Examining these practices can help identify the strengths of existing literacy initiatives as well as the challenges that may limit their

implementation. In this regard, a qualitative investigation at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan is relevant because it can provide a contextual understanding of how teachers translate literacy objectives into classroom practices. The resulting insights may inform the improvement of school literacy programs and support the development of learning environments that encourage students to read regularly, comprehend information critically, and develop a lasting interest in reading.

Considering the complexity of these issues, a scientific investigation focusing on teachers' strategies for fostering a reading culture is essential. A qualitative exploration of teaching practices is particularly important for identifying both the factors contributing to successful literacy implementation and the less visible challenges encountered by teachers amid the increasing distractions associated with the digital era. The findings of this empirical study are expected not only to enrich the theoretical discourse on the sociology of education but also to provide practical contributions in the form of critical evaluations, strategic recommendations, and constructive suggestions for the management of SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan in developing more effective, impactful, and student-centered literacy programs. Based on this rationale, the present study specifically aims to describe, examine, and comprehensively analyze the strategies implemented by teachers to foster a reading culture among students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth and comprehensive description of teachers' strategies for fostering a reading culture among students (Creswell, 2016). The research was conducted at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan, Indonesia. The research subjects consisted of Indonesian language teachers, who were primarily responsible for implementing literacy strategies, and several students who actively participated in school literacy activities.

Data were collected comprehensively through three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine the implementation and dynamics of literacy activities within the school environment. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers and students to obtain detailed information about the strategies implemented and students' responses to the literacy programs. Documentation served as supplementary data and included photographs of literacy activities, literacy program schedules, and official documents related to the school's literacy initiatives.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which involves three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Sugiyono, 2019). Data reduction involved selecting, summarizing, and focusing the information relevant to the research objectives. Data display was conducted by organizing the information into descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation. Conclusion drawing and verification involved identifying patterns and interpreting the findings in relation to the research focus. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation by comparing information obtained from teachers and students, as well as methodological triangulation by cross-checking data from observations, interviews, and documentation.

Results and Discussion

1. Teachers' Strategies for Fostering a Literacy Culture among Students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan

Teachers' strategies for fostering a literacy culture comprise a series of planned efforts

aimed at establishing reading habits, improving students' text comprehension, and developing their critical thinking skills. Based on the qualitative research materials provided from SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan, Indonesian language teachers employ five main strategies to foster a literacy culture: establishing regular reading habits, providing classroom reading corners, optimizing the use of the school library, integrating literacy activities into classroom instruction, and providing motivation and appreciation to students. These strategies indicate that the development of a literacy culture depends not only on the availability of reading materials but also on the consistency of program implementation and teachers' involvement in creating a learning environment that supports reading activities.

The first strategy involves establishing a habit of reading for 15 minutes before the main learning session begins. During this activity, students are given the opportunity to read non-academic books according to their individual interests and preferences. This freedom allows students to explore various types of reading materials, including fiction, biographies, general knowledge books, and other informative texts. Regular reading activities can serve as an initial step toward developing students' familiarity with books while gradually establishing sustainable reading habits. This practice also provides students with an opportunity to focus their attention before engaging in classroom learning. Sutrianto et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of habituation and the development of a literacy-rich environment as part of efforts to establish a reading culture in schools. Therefore, consistency in implementing reading activities is essential to ensure that reading does not remain a routine obligation but gradually becomes an integral part of students' learning needs.

The second strategy involves providing a reading corner in every classroom. The availability of reading corners enables students to access reading materials conveniently without having to visit the school library every time they wish to read. Collections of fiction and nonfiction books available in classrooms can be used during free time, breaks, or after students have completed their learning assignments. This facility also contributes to creating a classroom environment that encourages reading activities. Reading corners function not only as places to store books but also as resources for introducing students to diverse sources of knowledge. To maximize their effectiveness, teachers need to consider the variety of available materials, the suitability of reading difficulty levels for students' abilities, and the organization of book collections. A school environment that provides easy access to reading materials can support the development of literacy habits when accompanied by consistent reading activities and appropriate teacher guidance.

The third strategy concerns optimizing the use of the school library as a center for literacy activities. The library can serve not only as a place to borrow and read books but also as a learning resource that supports academic activities. Indonesian language teachers can guide students in finding books related to lesson topics, identifying relevant information, writing summaries, preparing book reviews, and comparing information from multiple sources. Through these activities, students gain more structured reading experiences with clear learning objectives. Using the library to complete assignments can also strengthen students' independence in seeking information and improve their reading comprehension skills. Teachers play an important role in ensuring that library visits go beyond students' physical presence and result in meaningful literacy engagement. With appropriate management, the library can become an essential component of the learning ecosystem that encourages curiosity, broadens knowledge, and develops critical thinking skills.

The fourth strategy is implemented by integrating literacy activities into Indonesian language instruction. In practice, teachers can design activities that actively engage

students in understanding and processing information from texts. These activities include identifying main ideas, locating important information, interpreting textual meaning, summarizing reading materials, evaluating authors' arguments, and communicating their understanding through group discussions and presentations. Integrating literacy into classroom instruction establishes a direct connection between reading activities, learning objectives, and the competencies students are expected to acquire. Students are not merely encouraged to finish reading a text but are also trained to understand, evaluate, and apply the information they obtain. Teachers can select a variety of texts that correspond to the learning materials and students' characteristics to make literacy activities more relevant to their everyday experiences. Through this approach, a literacy culture can become an integral part of daily teaching and learning rather than an additional activity conducted outside the regular instructional process.

The fifth strategy involves providing motivation and appreciation to increase students' engagement in literacy activities. Teachers can offer verbal encouragement, positive feedback, recognition of reading efforts, and simple rewards to students who demonstrate progress in their literacy activities. Forms of appreciation can be adapted to the school's needs and circumstances, such as giving students opportunities to share books they have read, displaying their book reviews, or recognizing students who consistently participate in reading activities. These approaches can help students feel that their efforts are valued and that reading has meaningful benefits for their learning. Appreciation should not focus exclusively on the number of books read or the speed with which students complete their reading but should also consider comprehension, persistence, skill development, and participation. Teachers also need to cultivate intrinsic motivation by helping students discover reading materials that match their interests. In this way, appreciation serves as a form of reinforcement that supports students' awareness of reading as a valuable activity for expanding knowledge and developing personal capabilities.

These five strategies demonstrate that fostering a literacy culture requires an integrated approach involving habituation, the provision of facilities, the utilization of learning resources, the incorporation of reading activities into instruction, and the strengthening of student motivation. Regular reading activities provide opportunities to establish routines, reading corners make reading materials more accessible to students, and the school library broadens their access to information resources. Integrating literacy into classroom instruction helps students develop the skills needed to understand and process information, while motivation and appreciation can support their continued participation. The effectiveness of these strategies should be assessed not only in terms of program implementation but also through changes in reading behavior, student engagement, and reading comprehension. Sustaining literacy programs also requires institutional support through adequate facilities and consistent activity planning. Collaboration among teachers, school administrators, students, and families is equally important to ensure that reading habits developed at school can be maintained in everyday life.

Based on this discussion, teachers' strategies for fostering a literacy culture among students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan can be understood as efforts encompassing habituation, the learning environment, instructional practices, and motivation. Teachers play an important role in organizing literacy activities so that they become structured, accessible, and relevant learning experiences that meet students' needs. The success of these strategies requires consistent implementation, the availability of diverse reading materials, and ongoing evaluation of students' engagement and literacy development. A sustainable literacy culture cannot be established through occasional reading activities alone; it requires continuous guidance and a supportive environment. Therefore, efforts to strengthen literacy strategies at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan should focus on developing reading habits

accompanied by comprehension, reflection, and the ability to use information critically.

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Teachers' Strategies for Fostering a Literacy Culture among Students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan

The success of fostering a literacy culture in schools is influenced by various interrelated factors originating from both within and outside the school environment. The implementation of teachers' strategies to develop a literacy culture depends not only on teachers' ability to design reading activities but also on the availability of facilities and infrastructure, school policy support, student characteristics, and family involvement. These conditions indicate that a literacy culture emerges from an educational process that requires continuity in planning, implementation, and habituation. Analyzing supporting and inhibiting factors is necessary to understand the conditions that enable literacy strategies to function effectively while identifying aspects that require improvement. Examining these factors can provide a foundation for schools to develop literacy programs that correspond to the needs and characteristics of students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan.

The first supporting factor concerns teachers' commitment to implementing literacy activities consistently. Teachers play a strategic role in establishing reading habits through role modeling, guidance, and the organization of learning activities. Their consistency in guiding students to read, select reading materials, comprehend texts, and communicate information can foster a learning environment that values literacy. Such role modeling is important because teachers' behavior can influence how students perceive reading as part of their academic needs and personal development. Teachers who create engaging learning experiences may also increase students' participation in literacy activities. The role of educators extends beyond providing reading instructions to include guiding students in understanding the benefits of reading and developing an interest in diverse sources of knowledge.

The second supporting factor is the availability of facilities and infrastructure that enable students to access reading materials easily. School libraries, classroom reading corners, and diverse book collections can expand students' opportunities to engage in reading activities. Accessibility is an essential element in creating a literacy-rich environment because students need reading materials that are readily available and appropriate to their developmental levels and interests. Diverse collections, including literary works, popular science books, biographies, and other informative texts, provide students with alternatives for discovering engaging reading materials. The management of literacy facilities should also consider the physical condition of books, the organization of collections, and the convenience of borrowing procedures. Adequate facilities can provide greater benefits when supported by systematic management and sustained integration into learning activities.

The third supporting factor involves school policies and an institutional culture that position literacy as an integral part of education. Reading activities before lessons, library utilization, classroom reading corners, and the integration of reading into subject instruction require coordination and support from school administrators. Clear policies can help teachers implement literacy programs systematically, while coordination among teachers enables literacy activities to be developed consistently across different subjects. A school culture that values reading can also be fostered through dedicated reading time, exhibitions of students' literacy-related work, book discussions, and information-sharing activities. Institutional support is essential to ensure that program implementation does not depend solely on individual teachers' initiatives. Literacy programs are more likely to be sustained when the school community shares a commitment to making literacy part of

students' learning habits.

Another supporting factor relates to students' motivation, interests, and participation in reading activities. An interest in particular topics can encourage students to select books independently, complete their reading, and seek additional information about subjects that appeal to them. Freedom to choose reading materials allows students to develop learning autonomy and establish positive relationships with reading. Appropriate recognition can strengthen student participation, particularly when appreciation is based on persistence, skill development, and engagement in literacy activities. Teachers need to create reading experiences that are relevant to students' lives so that reading is not perceived merely as a school requirement. Developing intrinsic motivation is particularly important because a sustainable literacy culture requires students to develop the willingness and awareness to read, including outside formal learning situations.

One potential inhibiting factor in implementing literacy strategies is the low reading interest of some students. Students' interest in reading may vary depending on their learning experiences, family habits, access to reading materials, and preferences for leisure activities. Students who are not accustomed to reading for extended periods may experience difficulties maintaining concentration or comprehending texts in depth. These conditions may lead students to participate in reading activities merely to comply with teachers' instructions without sufficient intellectual engagement. Addressing this challenge requires consideration of individual student characteristics through the selection of engaging reading materials, the use of texts with appropriate difficulty levels, and opportunities to discuss reading content. A gradual and supportive approach is more appropriate than an approach that emphasizes compliance with reading requirements without considering students' learning experiences.

Limited reading materials and the suboptimal utilization of literacy facilities may also hinder the development of a reading culture. Collections that lack variety, insufficient quantities of reading materials, or content that does not correspond to students' interests can reduce the appeal of literacy activities. The existence of a library and classroom reading corners does not automatically guarantee the formation of reading habits if these facilities are not managed and utilized effectively. Other challenges may include limited instructional time, a demanding curriculum, and the inconsistent integration of literacy activities into classroom instruction. Teachers need to adapt their strategies to school conditions by utilizing available reading materials, developing short but purposeful reading activities, and incorporating literacy tasks into regular instruction. Creative resource management can help sustain literacy programs even when schools face limitations in facilities.

External factors that may inhibit the development of a literacy culture are associated with family environments and students' habits outside school. Family support can strengthen reading habits through the provision of reading materials, learning assistance, and parental role modeling in the use of information resources. Limited access to books at home, insufficient parental guidance, or the absence of regular reading routines within the family may reduce the sustainability of reading habits developed at school. The use of digital devices primarily for entertainment can also present a challenge when students do not receive sufficient guidance on using technology as a source of knowledge. This issue should be considered proportionately because digital devices can also support literacy when used to read electronic books, access credible information sources, and develop digital text comprehension skills. Collaboration between schools and families can be strengthened through communication about students' literacy development, recommendations for reading materials, and the establishment of reading routines at home according to each family's circumstances.

An analysis of supporting and inhibiting factors indicates that developing a literacy culture requires adaptive and sustainable strategies. Teacher commitment, adequate facilities, school policies, and student participation can strengthen program implementation, while low reading interest, limited reading materials, time constraints, and insufficient family support are aspects that require attention. Addressing these challenges involves more than increasing the number of reading activities; it also requires evaluating implementation quality, the suitability of reading materials, student engagement, and the development of reading comprehension. Schools can use evaluation results to improve library management, diversify literacy activities, and strengthen coordination between teachers and parents. Therefore, fostering a literacy culture among students at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan should focus on creating a learning environment that provides access to reading materials, encourages active participation, and supports the continuous development of reading habits.

Conclusion

Indonesian language teachers at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan implement various strategies to foster a reading culture among students. These strategies include establishing a habit of silent reading for 15 minutes before lessons begin, providing reading corners in every classroom, optimizing the school library as a learning resource center, integrating literacy activities into Indonesian language instruction, and providing motivation and appreciation to students. The implementation of these strategies aims to develop reading habits, increase student engagement in literacy activities, and strengthen their ability to comprehend and critically evaluate information. Sustaining literacy programs requires a shared commitment among teachers, school administrators, and parents through the provision of reading materials that match students' interests, the effective management of literacy facilities, and the consistent promotion of reading habits at school and at home. Collaboration among these stakeholders is expected to strengthen the school's literacy culture and contribute to improved learning quality and the development of students' critical thinking skills at SMPN 20 Bengkulu Selatan.

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