

Implementation of the Literacy Program to Improve Reading Skills in Indonesian Language Subjects in Class III of Muhammadiyah 074 Torbanua Raja Private Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is: 1. To determine the implementation of literacy programs in improving reading skills in Indonesian language subjects of grade III students at SD Swasta 074 Muhammadiyah Torbanua Raja. 2. To identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of literacy programs to improve reading skills of grade III students in Indonesian language subjects at SD Swasta 074 Muhammadiyah Torbanua Raja. This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques using observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques use data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. The research subjects in this study were the principal, the third-grade homeroom teacher, and students of Muhammadiyah Torbanua 074 Private Elementary School. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study indicate that the literacy program is being implemented at Muhammadiyah Torbanua Raja 074 Private Elementary School. This includes the habituation of literacy activities in the classroom, the presence of a reading corner, the arrangement of attractive reading books, and the promotion of literacy outside the classroom. Supporting factors for the implementation of the literacy program include the availability of textbooks and level books, parental motivation for students, and a supportive school environment. Inhibiting factors for the implementation of the literacy program to improve students' reading skills include: limited learning time, and a lack of reading books.

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Introduction

Literacy is a fundamental foundation of the educational process, encompassing not only reading and writing skills but also critical thinking, reasoning, and effective communication (Susanti et al., 2023). In this modern era, literacy is a crucial indicator for measuring the quality of a nation's human resources. Therefore, strengthening literacy must be a primary focus in education, particularly at the elementary school level, as the initial stage in developing students' basic skills.

According to UNESCO data from 2012, the Indonesian reading skill index was only 0.001, meaning that out of every 1,000 Indonesians, only one person has an interest in reading (Harahap et al., 2022). This figure indicates that Indonesians' reading skills and interest are still very low. This is reinforced by a 2015 study by the National Library, which found that Indonesians' reading interest was in the low category, with a score of 25.1 on a scale of 100 (Fahrianur et al., 2023). Although the Reading Enthusiasm Level (TGM) reached 66.77 in 2023, challenges remain, particularly in terms of the availability of appropriate reading materials and library accessibility in various regions.

The Ministry of Education and Culture developed a school literacy program known as the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which aims to foster a culture of literacy in schools. The GLS consists of three main stages: habituation, development, and learning (Garcia et al., 2023). This policy foundation aligns with Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2015 concerning the Development of Character, which mandates the habit of reading as a form of positive character development in schools.

Reading skills are a fundamental competency that is crucial in education, as they serve as the primary tool for acquiring and processing information. These skills play a crucial role in supporting students' self-confidence and motivation to learn in the classroom (Komalasari & Riani, 2023). In the context of elementary education, reading skills not only help students understand subject matter but also influence overall learning outcomes, particularly in text-based subjects like Indonesian.

Based on a preliminary study conducted through interviews with class teachers at Muhammadiyah Torbanua Raja 074 Private Elementary School, several indications were found that third-grade students' reading skills still face various challenges. Teachers stated that some students were not yet fluent readers, had difficulty comprehending the content of reading materials, and were unable to draw conclusions from texts they read independently. Furthermore, during turn-based reading activities, some students appeared to lack confidence and even displayed a lack of enthusiasm.

To comprehensively understand these issues, this study sought to provide solutions through a focused study, namely by examining the implementation of the literacy program in more depth. The focus of the research included evaluating teacher strategies in integrating literacy into the learning process and identifying factors that support and hinder the program's success.

Method

This study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to determine the implementation of the literacy program in improving the reading skills of third-grade students. The study was conducted at Muhammadiyah Torbanua Raja 074 Private Elementary School, located in Torbanua Raja Village, Panyabungan Utara District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra.

The research subjects consisted of the principal, the third-grade homeroom teacher, and 13 third-grade students at Muhammadiyah Torbanua Raja 074 Private Elementary School. Data sources in this study included primary data obtained directly from interviews with the principal, the third-grade homeroom teacher, and students, as well as secondary data in the form of school documents and archives related to the literacy program.

Data collection techniques were conducted through three methods: (1) direct observation to observe the implementation of the literacy program in the classroom and school environment, (2) in-depth interviews with the principal, the third-grade homeroom teacher, and students to obtain information about the program's implementation, and (3) documentation in the form of activity photographs and other supporting documents.

To ensure data validity, researchers employed source triangulation techniques by comparing data obtained from various informants, diligent observation to identify elements relevant to the research, and sufficient references through supporting documentation.

The data analysis technique employed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three stages: (1) data reduction by summarizing and selecting relevant data, (2) presenting data in the form of descriptive narratives, and (3) drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data.

Results and Discussion

1. Literacy Program Implementation

Based on observations and interviews, the implementation of the literacy program at Muhammadiyah 074 Torbanua Raja Private Elementary School includes several main activities:

a. Introducing Literacy Activities in the Classroom

Literacy activities in grade III are carried out before the start of learning activities, specifically from Thursday to Saturday. Students are given the opportunity to read a book of their choice for 15 minutes. After reading, students are asked to write a summary of the story in a special literacy book and then retell the story to the class.

This activity aims to foster students' self-confidence, courage, and storytelling skills. The grade III homeroom teacher explained that this habit can foster students' love of reading and stimulate their curiosity about books.

b. Reading Corner in the Classroom

The school provides a reading corner in each classroom, attractively designed to attract students' interest in reading. This reading corner contains various books collected from students and the school library. The third-grade homeroom teacher explained that the reading corner was created to create a fun learning environment and bring reading materials closer to students, thus making literacy activities more accessible.

c. Attractive Book Arrangement

The third-grade homeroom teacher strives to organize the classroom with an attractive arrangement of books to create an engaging reading environment. This is because students always want new things to read, so a neat and attractive arrangement can increase their interest in reading.

d. Literacy Habits Outside the Classroom

In addition to classroom activities, literacy activities are also conducted outside the classroom, such as in the school garden. The third-grade homeroom teacher explained that these outdoor activities aim to relieve students' boredom and fatigue. With a different atmosphere, students become more enthusiastic about reading.

One student said, "I like reading now because there are many unique books in the library and in the reading corner. We read books about animals, plants, and also fairy tales. Sometimes we read outside the classroom, specifically in the school garden near the bougainvillea flowers in the schoolyard."

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

a. Supporting Factors:

- 1) Adequate Facilities: The school provides a library, reading corner, and reading garden that can be used for literacy activities. The principal stated that these facilities do not hinder students from reading.
- 2) Learning Books and Leveled Books: The school has a variety of books, ranging from learning textbooks, story books, to knowledge books. These books are leveled according to each grade level, including reading books from Usaid Prioritas tailored for grades I, II, and III.
- 3) Supportive School Environment: A clean and comfortable school environment supports literacy activities. Students are involved in scheduled cleaning duties to ensure the environment is clean before literacy activities begin.
- 4) Parental Motivation: Some parents provide full support by purchasing reading books for their children and providing both material and non-material motivation.

b. Inhibiting Factors:

- 1) Limited Learning Time: 15 minutes for literacy activities is sometimes insufficient, especially when students are sharing the content of the reading. This can slow down the learning process.
- 2) Many missing books: Many books in the library collection go missing because students don't store them properly after reading, reducing the number of books.

Discussion

The research results indicate that the literacy program at Muhammadiyah 074 Torbanua Raja Private Elementary School has been structured and integrated into daily learning activities. The program, which includes a 15-minute reading habit, a reading corner, an attractive book display, and out-of-classroom literacy activities, aligns with the stages of the School Literacy Movement (GLS) developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

These findings align with research by Saadati and Sadli (2019), which demonstrated that developing a literacy culture through planning, implementation, and evaluation positively impacts students' reading enthusiasm, love, and skills. This research also supports the findings of Nurmahanani (2023), who stated that literacy programs significantly improve reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and fluency in lower-grade students. The presence of a reading corner and an attractive book display are important factors in increasing students' interest in reading. This aligns with the findings of Kasman et al. (2016) stated that providing reading corners in classrooms facilitates access

to reading materials and increases student interaction with books, particularly in elementary schools.

Supporting factors such as adequate facilities, graded books, a conducive school environment, and parental motivation align with research by Komalasari and Riani (2023), who stated that school support, teacher involvement, parental involvement, and student motivation are key factors in the success of literacy programs. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors such as time constraints and the loss of reading books require serious attention. Fahrianur et al. (2023) noted that limited learning time often results in literacy activities being positioned as supplementary activities, rather than as a core part of the learning process. To address the problem of lost books, a better library management system is needed, involving dedicated staff and implementing a structured lending system.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the implementation of the literacy program at SD Swasta 074 Muhammadiyah Torbanua Raja includes: (a) habituating literacy activities in the classroom for 15 minutes before learning begins, (b) providing a reading corner in the classroom, (c) arranging interesting reading books, and (d) habituating literacy outside the classroom. These activities have been proven to improve the reading skills of third-grade students in Indonesian language subjects. In addition, supporting factors for the implementation of the literacy program include adequate facilities, the availability of learning books and leveled books, a supportive school environment, and parental motivation. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include limited learning time and the large number of missing reading books.

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