



Utilization of the Reading Corner to Increase Reading Interest in Grade 7 Students

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ABSTRACT

The classroom reading corner is a key initiative to increase students' reading interest, supporting the School Literacy Movement. This study examines how reading corners help develop reading habits, foster curiosity, and enhance literacy skills among Grade 7 students. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with data collected from observations, interviews, and documentation between February and June 2024. The reading corner program was implemented by organizing structured reading activities, incorporating varied reading materials, and creating a comfortable environment to sustain engagement. The findings showed that reading corners positively impact students' reading behavior, encouraging them to read regularly and improve comprehension skills. Students became more enthusiastic about reading, demonstrating increased fluency and critical thinking. This study highlights that optimizing reading corners is an effective literacy strategy to promote reading culture, develop cognitive skills, and support long-term educational success.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals into knowledgeable and dignified members of society (Mitrova & Koceva, 2024). Through education, students develop critical thinking, creativity, and character-building skills that prepare them for future challenges (Haniah et al., 2020). One of the fundamental aspects of education is the cultivation of literacy, which includes reading, writing, and arithmetic. A strong reading culture, often referred to as literacy culture, is essential for broadening knowledge and fostering intellectual growth. In line with Permendikbud Number 23 of 2015, the School Literacy Movement was introduced to promote character development through reading activities (Farikah, 2019; Jamil et al., 2022; Ekayani & Suwedawati, 2023; Nadifa & Zulvani, 2024). This literacy movement is a key initiative that every student must engage in to enhance their reading and comprehension skills (Viyana et al., 2023).

Education at the foundational level should focus on developing basic literacy skills, as these serve as the building blocks for higher education (Brown, 2014). One of the government's initiatives to increase reading interest is the School Literacy Movement, which aims to instill a sense of curiosity and the habit of seeking knowledge. A practical approach to achieving this goal is the establishment of reading corners within classrooms and school environments. Reading corners are designed to provide accessible reading materials and create an inviting space where students can develop a habit of reading during their free time. By utilizing these spaces effectively, students engage in meaningful and constructive activities, making productive use of their leisure time.

A reading corner is defined as the dedicated use of a space within a classroom or school to house books and literacy materials that encourage reading engagement. Literacy, in this context, refers to the ability to process and understand information, particularly through reading. The Reading Corner program, introduced by the government, serves as a supplementary literacy initiative to increase students' interest in reading. Unlike traditional library spaces, reading corners are positioned within classrooms, making books easily accessible to students.

Reading corners are designed to be visually appealing and comfortable, ensuring that students feel motivated to spend time reading. The decoration of the reading corner, often done by students themselves, not only enhances aesthetic appeal but also encourages creativity and a sense of ownership over their learning environment.

Low reading interest negatively impacts reading habits, making it crucial to instill a love for reading from an early age. Several factors contribute to low student interest in reading, including:

- (i) Limited reading skills, making reading a challenging activity.
- (ii) The dominance of entertainment media, such as television and mobile phones, diverting attention from books.
- (iii) A lack of engaging books, leading to boredom and disinterest.

To address these challenges, some researchers suggested implementing literacy-supporting facilities, such as reading corners within classrooms. Unlike libraries, reading corners contain a curated selection of books designed to be accessible and engaging for students. The goal of a reading corner is to:

- (i) Foster a love for reading among students.
- (ii) Improve literacy skills, including reading comprehension and fluency.
- (iii) Encourage students to engage in structured reading routines.
- (iv) Provide an alternative learning space that supplements library access.

(v) Promote independent and group reading activities.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of reading corners in improving student literacy, such as the utilization of reading corners to improve literacy, showing that reading corners significantly increased students' reading interest in Grade 7 at SD Menenga (Seniani *et al.*, 2023), the utilization of reading corners to enhance reading interest in students, finding that reading corners helped students engage with books more frequently as part of the school literacy movement, and reading corners in playing a crucial role in enhancing literacy skills, particularly in helping students improve reading fluency and comprehension during Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) literacy activities (Arum Rahayu, 2021).

Although previous research has explored the impact of reading corners on student literacy, most studies have focused on elementary school students or general literacy habits. This study provides a new perspective by examining the effectiveness of reading corners in improving literacy among Grade 7 students, particularly those with low AKM scores. Based on the issues identified, this study aims to examine the utilization of reading corners as a strategy to increase reading interest among Grade 7 students at National Junior High School Satap Ligalejo. The study conducted research for

- (i) Describing reading literacy activities facilitated by the reading corner program.
- (ii) Analyzing the impact of reading corners on students' reading interests and literacy development.
- (iii) Providing insights into how structured literacy initiatives can foster long-term reading engagement.

The novelty of this research lies in:

- (i) Targeting middle school students (Grade 7), an age group where literacy development is crucial for academic success but often overlooked.
- (ii) Linking reading corner utilization with AKM literacy performance, providing measurable indicators of improvement.
- (iii) Integrating structured literacy activities (reading schedules, writing reflections, and group discussions) into the reading corner program.
- (iv) Emphasizing the role of collaboration between schools, teachers, and parents in sustaining reading interest beyond the classroom.

This research contributes to the field of education by exploring an alternative literacy initiative that can be integrated into school learning environments. By fostering a culture of reading, this study supports efforts to:

- (i) Improve literacy engagement in students with low reading interest.
- (ii) Encourage schools to adopt structured literacy programs that promote reading habits.
- (iii) Provide recommendations for educators and policymakers in implementing effective literacy strategies.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach to analyze the utilization of reading corners in enhancing students' reading interest. The research was conducted at National Junior High School Satap Ligalejo, Ende, Indonesia from 26 February to 24 June 2024, as part of the Teaching Campus program. The subjects included 20 participants, consisting of teachers and 7th-grade students at the school.

The data collection methods used in this research were observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation method was used to examine how the reading corner contributed to increasing students' reading interest, writing skills, and critical thinking in

Grade 7. The interview method involved a series of questions addressed to the 7th-grade homeroom teacher to gain insights into the role of the reading corner in enhancing students' reading engagement. The documentation method was employed to collect relevant records and supporting materials related to the implementation of the reading corner and students' participation in literacy activities.

The data in this study were analyzed using a qualitative analysis framework, which involved data collection, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data were systematically organized to identify patterns and themes, leading to a detailed qualitative analysis of how the reading corner influences students' reading interests. The findings indicate that the reading corner serves as an effective strategy to enhance students' reading interest, creating an engaging literacy environment that fosters reading habits and academic development.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in Grade 7 at National Junior High School Satap Ligalejo in Indonesia from 26 February to 14 June 2024, as part of the 7th batch Teaching Campus program. The Teaching Campus program provides an opportunity for students from various academic disciplines to develop their teaching skills and contribute to educational improvement. The primary objective of this study was to support literacy development through structured literacy programs, both those designed by the Ministry of Education and those initiated by the 7th batch of Teaching Campus students.

Interviews with teachers at National Junior High School Satap Ligalejo identified several key factors contributing to low literacy skills, including:

- (i) Lack of parental support and encouragement for reading at home.
- (ii) An underdeveloped library environment that lacks organization and accessibility.
- (iii) Outdated and insufficient reading materials that fail to engage students.
- (iv) Absence of structured literacy activities before and during school hours.

Observations in Grade 7 at National Junior High School Satap Ligalejo revealed a lack of reading interest among students. The low literacy levels were evident in students' poor reading skills, with only 26% of the 20 participating students demonstrating the ability to answer questions based on their readings. Additionally, one student struggled significantly, unable to read even a single sentence fluently and having difficulty distinguishing between capital and lowercase letters, including writing their name. Furthermore, the Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) results indicate that Grade 7 students demonstrated low literacy proficiency, particularly in reading comprehension and text interpretation. AKM, a national standardized assessment, is designed to evaluate students' fundamental skills in literacy and numeracy. The low scores in literacy highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve students' reading abilities.

The results from observations conducted in Grade 7 for low students' reading interest were evident during initial literacy activities, where some students struggled with reading fluency. Interviews with homeroom teachers highlighted several factors contributing to low literacy levels, including a lack of student interest in books, minimal parental encouragement, an underutilized library space, outdated reading materials, and the absence of structured literacy activities before classroom learning. Additionally, teachers had not implemented special literacy guidance programs for students. Detailed information regarding this matter is explained in the next section of this paper.

3.1. Implementation of the Literacy Movement Through the Reading Corner

To address these challenges, a reading corner was established in Grade 7 to create an engaging literacy environment. This initiative was implemented every Wednesday and Saturday, where students were required to read and write reflections based on their reading. Each student had to bring a library book to place in the reading corner, which they would read throughout the semester. During literacy sessions, students were given one hour to read and then 15 minutes to summarize key points from their reading. Additionally, students were encouraged to express their opinions about the book's plot, identify their favorite characters, and justify their choices.

This activity was designed not only to promote reading habits but also to enhance critical thinking and analytical skills. Through regular participation, students became more accustomed to engaging with texts, forming opinions, and improving their comprehension abilities.

3.2. Collaboration Between School, Teachers, and Parents

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in supporting students' reading habits. Without school-parent collaboration, students may lack motivation to read outside of school. Parents were encouraged to monitor students' reading habits, reduce screen time (e.g., cellphone and television use), and create a home environment conducive to reading. As a result, students became more engaged in reading and writing activities at home, reinforcing the literacy skills developed at school.

3.3. Selection of Reading Materials

One of the factors contributing to student disengagement in reading was the lack of diverse and appealing books. To maintain students' interest, a strategy was introduced where students could select books based on their preferred themes. Students were grouped based on their reading interests, and books were updated regularly to prevent monotony. Each week, students were required to bring at least three books to the class library and were encouraged to visit the school library for additional reading materials. Additionally, students participated in weekly group discussions, where they shared insights from their readings, expressed opinions, and engaged in peer discussions about different books.

3.4. Observations and Findings

Observations showed that students were highly enthusiastic about participating in literacy activities. Initially, some students struggled to stay engaged, but over time, their interest in reading increased. Students also began reading not only storybooks but also academic books, demonstrating a shift in their attitude toward reading.

During the literacy sessions, improvements were observed in several areas:

- (i) Increased engagement in the School Literacy Movement – Students read books twice a week and were given 15 minutes to summarize their readings. They also improved in pronunciation, pacing, and reading fluency.
- (ii) Enhanced role of parents and teachers – With reduced screen time at home, students started using their free time for reading, either individually or in groups.
- (iii) More active participation in book selection – Students were more engaged in discussions after reading in groups, showing greater confidence in expressing opinions and asking teachers for clarification when needed.

Interviews with the Grade 7 homeroom teacher confirmed that the utilization of the reading corner had a positive impact on students' literacy skills. Students who were initially reluctant to read became more interested and enthusiastic about books. Those who previously struggled with reading fluency showed notable improvements in reading comprehension. Furthermore, students who had difficulty distinguishing capital and lowercase letters were able to recognize and apply correct writing conventions after consistent participation in literacy activities.

These findings highlight the effectiveness of reading corners in fostering literacy skills. Structured literacy activities not only encourage reading habits but also improve comprehension, writing skills, and critical thinking. As a result, students developed a greater appreciation for reading, leading to long-term academic and cognitive benefits.

The implementation of the Teaching Campus program at National Junior High School Satap Ligalejo has had a positive impact on increasing students' reading interest through structured literacy activities. Several initiatives were introduced to enhance reading engagement among Grade 7 students, including the implementation of the literacy movement, fostering cooperation between schools, parents, and teachers, and selecting appropriate reading materials. The reading corner program, placed in the Grade 7 classroom, provided a designated space for reading and writing activities, conducted every Wednesday and Friday. During these sessions, students engaged in reading for one hour, followed by 15 minutes of reflection and retelling key events from the books they read.

The literacy movement is a crucial effort to develop a reading culture among Indonesian children, ensuring that reading becomes a fundamental part of their daily lives. Teachers also play a key role in fostering literacy engagement by integrating sustainable and structured literacy activities into the school environment. Observations showed that students gradually became more engaged in reading and writing, as electronic media usage at home was reduced. Additionally, students actively participated in reading and group discussions during free time, demonstrating their growing enthusiasm for books.

The cooperative relationship between schools and parents has also contributed to improving students' reading motivation. Collaboration between schools and parents plays an important role in fostering students' learning motivation and academic success. Similarly, [Pesu et al. \(2016\)](#) emphasized that parental involvement in education significantly influences students' learning outcomes. With parental encouragement and reduced screen time, students have begun using their free time for reading, both individually and in groups.

Another important factor in sustaining reading engagement is providing diverse and appealing books. The observation results indicate that students began selecting books that matched their interests, fostering a habit of regular reading. Reading materials must be engaging and aligned with students' interests, including themes, illustrations, language, and characters, to encourage reading comprehension and storytelling skills. The Reading Corner program has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing students' enthusiasm for reading, providing them with valuable knowledge, critical thinking skills, and broad insight.

The success of this program demonstrates that if reading becomes a daily habit, it can shape individuals with strong analytical skills and intellectual depth. The researcher hopes that the literacy initiatives implemented—the literacy movement, school-parent cooperation, and book selection strategies—will continue to enhance students' reading habits. The reading corner is an essential tool in fostering a culture of literacy, equipping students with knowledge and critical thinking skills that will benefit them in their academic journey and future careers. As reading broadens perspectives, it ultimately contributes to the overall quality of education and national development.

4. CONCLUSION

The utilization of the reading corner has effectively contributed to increasing students' reading interest in Grade 7 at National Junior High School Satap Ligalejo. Several key activities have played a crucial role in this improvement, including the implementation of the literacy movement, the collaboration between schools, parents, and teachers, and the selection of appropriate reading materials. These strategies have fostered a positive reading culture and encouraged students to engage in literacy activities.

Observations revealed that students developed a growing enthusiasm for reading, actively using the reading corner during free periods and participating in daily 15-minute reading sessions before lessons. Additionally, interviews with Grade 7 teachers confirmed that students who were previously reluctant to read showed significant improvements. Initially, some students struggled with reading fluency and comprehension, but through structured literacy activities, they were able to summarize and retell stories effectively. Furthermore, students who previously could not differentiate between capital and lowercase letters demonstrated progress in their literacy skills after engaging in reading corner activities.

Thus, the implementation of structured literacy programs, including the literacy movement, collaboration between stakeholders, and book selection strategies, has successfully enhanced reading interest and literacy skills among students. The continued application of these strategies is expected to sustain long-term literacy development, fostering critical thinking and a lifelong reading habit in students.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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