Improving Reading Literacy Culture Through the Utilization of Reading Corners for Grade VII Students

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the low literacy rate in Indonesia, namely the lack of interest in reading, library utilization, and the availability of reading materials. The purpose of this study is to foster a culture of reading literacy through reading corners for grade VII students of private junior high schools in East Nusa Tenggara. This type of research uses a quantitative approach which in its implementation consists of 4 stages of implementation, namely 1) initial stage, 2) education stage, 3) implementation stage, and 4) evaluation stage. The subjects of this study were 30 grade VII students of private junior high schools in East Nusa Tenggara. The data collection method used in this study was the questionnaire method. The results of the study showed that through the utilization of reading corners, it had a positive impact on improving students' reading literacy culture. This is shown through an increase in the frequency of reading of students recorded in the questionnaire results after the reading corner was utilized optimally. Thus, it can be concluded that reading corners play an effective role as one of the strategies to improve reading literacy culture in junior high school students. By providing a comfortable and attractive reading corner, students can gain access to various types of books and reading materials that suit their interests and needs. In addition, the reading corner can also be a conducive place for students to discuss, share experiences, and gain new knowledge. Thus, the use of reading corners can help improve reading interest, reading skills, and reading literacy culture in Junior High School students.

Keywords: Literacy culture, reading corner, reading culture, Educational Intervention, Reading Interest

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya tingkat literasi di Indonesia, yaitu kurangnya minat baca, pemanfaatan perpustakaan, dan ketersediaan bahan bacaan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menumbuhkan budaya literasi membaca melalui pojok baca bagi siswa kelas VII di sekolah menengah pertama (SMP) swasta di Nusa Tenggara Timur. Jenis penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif yang dalam pelaksanaannya terdiri dari 4 tahap, yaitu: 1) tahap awal, 2) tahap edukasi, 3) tahap pelaksanaan, dan 4) tahap evaluasi. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah 30 siswa kelas VII dari SMP swasta di Nusa Tenggara Timur. Metode pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah metode angket. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa melalui pemanfaatan pojok baca, terdapat dampak positif terhadap peningkatan budaya literasi membaca siswa. Hal ini ditunjukkan melalui peningkatan frekuensi membaca siswa yang tercatat dalam hasil angket setelah pojok baca dimanfaatkan secara optimal. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa pojok baca dapat menjadi salah satu strategi untuk meningkatkan budaya literasi membaca siswa. Dengan menyediakan pojok baca yang nyaman dan menarik, siswa dapat mengakses berbagai jenis buku dan bahan bacaan yang sesuai dengan minat dan kebutuhan mereka. Selain itu, pojok baca juga dapat menjadi tempat yang kondusif bagi siswa untuk berdiskusi, berbagi pengalaman, dan memperoleh pengetahuan baru. Oleh karena itu, pemanfaatan pojok baca dapat membantu meningkatkan minat baca, keterampilan membaca, dan budaya literasi membaca apada siswa SMP.

Kata Kunci: Budaya literasi, pojok baca, budaya membaca, Intervensi Pendidikan, Minat Baca

INTRODUCTION

Reading habits are an important and fundamental aspect that needs to be developed to improve the quality of education optimally (Le Roux, 2024). Reading is not just an activity, but also a foundation that supports intellectual development and critical thinking skills. Literacy is broadly defined as a language ability, which includes the ability to listen, understand, and process information presented through various media critically and effectively to gain more knowledge (Islam, & Muna, 2024). According to Lestari et al. (2021), literacy is a comprehensive learning that involves identifying, understanding, communicating, and using written and printed information in various situations. Literacy can be used as a basis for developing effective learning in schools. Literacy makes students skilled in exploring and processing information needed in the life of science in the 21st century (Gogahu & Prasetyo, 2020). It can be interpreted that students will gain broader knowledge through literacy activities because it is closely related to critical thinking skills that involve how they identify, understand, and communicate (Kuswanto, 2022). According to UNESCO, academic research, cultural values, and experiences greatly influence people's understanding of the meaning of literacy.

Literacy cannot be separated from language because reading and writing skills are the main foundation. So it can be concluded that literacy is basically a reading and writing skill that opens the door to deeper understanding and education is the main way to develop this literacy (Yuliawati, 2021). In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture has encouraged the development of a culture of literacy in the school environment through the School Literacy Movement (GLS) program, which is part of the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 23 of 2015 concerning the development of character (Mansyur et al., 2023). The scope of the school literacy movement or GLS is the physical environment of the school which includes facilities and infrastructure, support from all parties in the school including teachers and students, as well as supporting programs to develop students' interest in reading in schools (Harahap et al., 2017). Thus, it is very important for schools to pay attention to these three aspects in order to maximize literacy culture through teaching reading so that it can simultaneously foster interest in reading in students supported by facilities and the role of all members of the school (Vargas, et. al., 2024). Teachers act as facilitators in developing a culture of literacy in schools, this is demonstrated by designing learning using literacy strategies, analyzing students' interests and talents, providing reading books that suit students' interests and talents, and assessing literacy activities carried out by students (Rohman et al., 2022).

Agustin (2025) explains three strategies to create a positive literacy culture in schools. First, creating a physical environment that supports literacy. This physical environment is the first thing that is seen and felt by the school community, so it needs to be designed to be friendly and conducive to learning. Second, building a social and affective environment that supports literate communication and interaction (Mog, & Gayan, 2024). This is achieved through a model of communication and interaction between school components. Third, ensuring that the school becomes a literate academic environment, by allocating sufficient time for literacy activities (Rizaldy, 2024).

However, in reality, literacy in Indonesia is still very low. In 2022, it was reported that the reading literacy score in Indonesia only reached 359 points. This figure is lower than the score of 371 points achieved in 2018. If we look more deeply, Indonesia's reading literacy score in 2022 is also lower than the achievement in 2000. This makes the 2022 literacy score the lowest since Indonesia began participating in PISA (GoodStats, 2023). The main factors in the low literacy rate in Indonesia are the lack of interest in reading, library utilization, and the availability of reading materials.

The main factors of low literacy rates in Indonesia are lack of interest in reading, library utilization, and availability of reading materials. As stated in the School Literacy Movement Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Implementation of the School Literacy Movement is carried out in three stages to build a culture of interrelated school literacy, namely 1) habituation, 2) development, 3) learning (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). This study focused on activities in the form of utilizing reading corners as facilities and infrastructure to improve reading literacy culture. Reading corners were established because the utilization of libraries was still less than optimal in many schools. Students' interest in visiting the library is also still minimal. The provision of reading collections that are not given enough attention and library management that is not optimal make the library underutilized. Reading corners are one of the programs that have been widely implemented by several schools in Indonesia. However, not all

schools have carried out good literacy activities. Through the implementation of reading corners, it is hoped that students can instill and improve the culture of literacy in schools, making reading a habit by doing it every day at school. There are many positive benefits that can be obtained from the habit of reading. In addition to expanding insight and knowledge, this habit can also foster creative and innovative traits in students. This is supported by previous research that the use of reading corners is effective in instilling and forming reading habits in students (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

In addition, another study explained that the implementation of the school literacy movement consisting of reading, writing, and speaking literacy for students through reading corners has an impact and changes in students' literacy interests (Mardiani & Wahyuni, 2022). Research (Wahyuni & Tranggono, 2023) explains that to increase students' interest in literacy, full support from students' parents is needed in fostering students' interest in literacy. Meanwhile, Ikhwanun's research revealed that the literacy movement at MIS Karanganyar 02 Tirto through empowering the library and reading corners along with collaboration between teachers and parents was able to build a culture of student literacy (Ikhwanun & Hayudinna, 2021). Furthermore, as stated in the research conducted by Ilmi, the role of school residents, supervision carried out by teachers, and support from students' parents are some of the factors in formingliteracy cultural environment (Ilmi et al., 2021)

As is known and explained by the researchers above, the existence of school reading corners can foster and improve student literacy. Therefore, this study is a reinforcement of previous researchers who focused on improving the culture of reading literacy through the use of reading corners. So the purpose of this study is to Improve the Culture of Reading Literacy Through the Use of Reading Corners in Grade VII Students at Private Junior High Schools in NTT.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach, aimed at revealing, explaining, and describing efforts to enhance reading literacy culture through the use of reading corners. This method allows for the collection of measurable data to evaluate the effectiveness of reading corners in fostering a stronger reading culture. The data are presented descriptively to illustrate the outcomes of the intervention.

Research Subject

The object of the study was located at a private junior high school in East Nusa Tenggara located in Keo Tengah District, Nagekeo Regency. The data source for this study used primary data sources. Primary data or field data is data obtained directly by researchers from informants, which means that the data is obtained directly from the results of filling out the questionnaire. The informants referred to in this study are Indonesian language teachers, class teachers, and class VII students of private junior high schools in East Nusa Tenggara.

Data Collection

The study was conducted at a private junior high school located in the Keo Tengah District, Nagekeo Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The primary data used in this study were collected directly from the field. These data were obtained through questionnaires completed by the informants, who included Indonesian language teachers, homeroom teachers, and Grade VII students at the selected school.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, in which respondents selected from five pre-defined options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. These responses were scored using a five-point Likert scale. The data collected were then analyzed using simple statistical methods, primarily percentage calculations, to determine the overall distribution and trends of student responses. This analysis helped to assess the effectiveness of the reading corners in fostering a culture of reading literacy among students.

 $P = \frac{F}{N}x \ 100\%$ Information: $P = Percentage \ number \ sought$ $F = Frequency \ (Score \ obtained)$ $N = Number \ of \ Frequencies \ (Maximum \ Score)$ $100\% = Fixed \ Number$

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Reading Corner Program

Before delving into the findings of this study, it is important to first review the implementation process of the reading program. The efforts to enhance the culture of reading literacy through the utilization of reading corners were carried out in several structured stages, as outlined below. *Initial Stage*

At this initial stage, the reading corner is designed and formed as attractively as possible, in order to attract students to stop by or sit while reading, writing or drawing. In designing and forming the reading corner, teachers and school leaders include motivational picture stickers on the walls. The arrangement of space for the reading corner is done considering comfort and accessibility. Hanging shelves are installed on the walls of the classroom corner, so that books can be easily accessed by students. The reading corner is well organized so that students feel comfortable when searching for and choosing books to read. Storing reading materials neatly on hanging shelves also contributes to an orderly and attractive classroom atmosphere. The results of the reading corner design can be seen in the picture below.



Figure 1. Provision of Reading Corner

Educational Stage

The education stage is the second stage in improving the culture of reading literacy in Private Junior High Schools in East Nusa Tenggara Before the delivery of education by the leaders and teachers Of course, with this education stage, students are expected to know, understand and enjoy the existence of reading corners on the side of their classes, both with motivational education verbally and motivation through posters and illustrated writing. This stage is an introduction for students to

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the importance of literacy and the benefits of literacy and the dangers of students if they are weak in literacy interest in the future. This education is of course integrated between school officials, teachers and homeroom teachers of class VII of Private Junior High Schools in East Nusa Tenggara, who have the same task, namely providing motivational education with the existence of class reading corners. In every formal learning, teachers are allowed to provide input, provide counseling and motivation for students to be more active and get used to learning both reading and writing. The education stage in utilizing reading corners to improve the culture of reading literacy in class VII students of Private Junior High Schools in East Nusa Tenggara can be seen in the following picture.



Figure 2. Educational Stage of Utilization of Reading Corner

To find out how students' reading abilities and interests are, the author conducted interviews with the principal and class teachers. The results of the interviews can be seen in the following interview instrument Table

Source person	A list of questions	Answer
Headmaster	What is the level of students' ability in reading activities?	Students' abilities in literacy activities, especially reading, are relatively low. This is caused by the lack of interest in reading from students and the lack of teachers' abilities in motivating students to read diligently.
Classroom teacher	Are the facilities at school adequate to increase students' interest in reading?	The facilities at school that are used to support students in learning, especially in reading activities, are inadequate. This is caused by the lack of reading books that are appropriate to the students' level of education and facilities such as libraries that students use in reading activities are not well organized, causing students to rarely visit the library to carry out reading activities.
	What causes lack of interest in reading in students?	The thing that causes students to be lazy to read is the lack of reading books that are appropriate to the students' abilities, and also students use the internet more to complete assignments easily than searching in books. Another thing that causes students' lack of interest in reading is online games, students

Table 1. Interview instrument Table

are more interested in playing online games
than studying.

Based on the results of interviews with the principal and teachers of grade VII of private junior high schools in East Nusa Tenggara, literacy education carried out by teachers and school leaders is one of the good things for children. Given that today there are many and widespread online games that cause students' interest in learning to decline. With this counseling and motivation, more or less students know the importance of learning in fostering a culture of literacy in general through the reading corner provided by the school.

Implementation Stage

After carrying out the stages of education about literacy culture through the reading corner, the implementation of habituation is carried out. This Implementation Stage is a process where students start and get used to learning through the reading corner, either reading books, writing lessons, or drawing when they have free time. Students who are used to diligently visiting the reading corner will get higher grades in the semester report card and will also get prizes. Of course, this provides its own enthusiasm for students to always be enthusiastic about learning. In order to find out the level of student attendance activity, the homeroom teacher and teachers monitor students every day, also by filling in the attendance list for those who visit the reading corner.

Evaluation Stage

In this evaluation stage, the main concern is when there are students in a class who do not have a weak attraction to the existence of this reading corner. So a new strategy is carried out to get students used to it, namely by utilizing the time for 15 minutes before the lesson starts for. Reading activities for 15 minutes on non-lesson books must be carried out every day which aims to get students used to literacy and also getting used to utilizing the reading corner can make students better understand the importance of these activities.

Reading Corner in Improving Reading Literacy Culture

To determine the level of reading literacy culture, a questionnaire was distributed to 30 students in grade VII of a private junior high school in East Nusa Tenggara using 8 instrument items which can be presented in the following Table.

No	Question	Number of	Scale	Percentage
		students		
1	How many times do you read in	10	Less than 3 times	33%
	a week?	12	3 times	40%
		8	More than 3 times	27%
		0	Every day	0%
2	How long does it take you to read	20	Less than 15 minutes	66%
	once?	5	15 minutes	17%
		5	More than 15 minutes	17%
3	How do you feel when reading?	15	Bored	50%
	-	10	Like	33%
		5	Just normal	17%

Table 2. Reading Interest Questionnaire of Grade VII Students of Private Middle Schools in
East Nusa Tenggara

4	What books do you often read?	15	Fiction	50%
		5	Non Fiction	17%
		10	Subject books	33%
No	Question	Number of	Scale	Percentage
		students		
5	Where do the reading sources	0	Internet	0%
	you read come from?	15	Personal book	50%
		15	Library books	50%
6	Where is the place you often use	20	School	66%
	to read?	10	House	33%
		0	Public places	0%
7	How important is reading in your 22		Important	73%
	opinion?	8	Quite important	27%
		0	Not important	0%
8	What is your reason for reading?	5	Entertainment	17%
		20	Increase knowledge	66%
		5	Claims	17%

Based on the results of the questionnaire, further analysis was carried out using four indicators of reading interest: enjoyment of reading, awareness of the benefits of reading, reading frequency, and sources of reading materials. The first indicator, enjoyment of reading, was reflected in students' emotional responses to reading. Data from question number 3 showed that 50% of students felt bored when reading, while only 33% reported feeling happy. This suggests that reading is not yet perceived as an enjoyable activity for many students, highlighting the need for more engaging and stimulating reading environments that foster positive experiences with reading. Creating interactive reading sessions and incorporating student interests into reading material may help increase engagement.

The second indicator, awareness of the benefits of reading, was measured through questions 7 and 8. Most students acknowledged the importance of reading; however, 33% rated it as only moderately important. This indicates varying levels of understanding regarding the value of reading. Furthermore, while 67% of students stated that they read primarily to gain knowledge, a notable portion read for entertainment or out of obligation. These results suggest that while awareness is generally present, efforts should be made to deepen students' intrinsic motivation and appreciation of reading's broader benefits. Educational programs emphasizing the lifelong value of reading may help reinforce this understanding.

The third indicator, reading frequency, was assessed through question number 1. The findings showed that only 27% of students read more than three times a week, and no students reported reading daily. This low frequency indicates that reading has not become a regular habit for most students, underlining the need to cultivate a stronger reading culture within the school environment. Strategies such as daily reading time, reading challenges, and teacher modeling could help establish consistent reading routines.

The fourth indicator, sources of reading materials, revealed that 50% of students read from personal books, while another 50% used school library books. However, none of the students reported reading from online or digital sources. In terms of content, 50% preferred fiction, 33% read textbooks, and only 17% engaged with nonfiction materials. These findings suggest limited access to diverse and high-quality reading resources. They also reflect the underutilization of school libraries and the absence of digital reading platforms, indicating the need to improve access and promote a wider range

of reading options. Expanding digital literacy initiatives and curating engaging online content could further enrich students' reading experiences.

The Success of Utilizing Reading Corners in Class VII of Private Middle Schools in East Nusa Tenggara

Table 3. Success of Utilization of Reading Corners			
No.	Question	Yes	No
1.	Is there any reading corner in the classroom?	100%	0%
2.	Does the reading corner help you in the learning process?	67%	33%
3.	Is the book collection in the reading corner always updated?	100%	0%
4.	Are there any read aloud activities with the teacher?	0%	100%
5.	Is there a collection list and summary books in the reading corner?	0%	100%
6.	Do you often communicate with teachers about the books you have read?	40%	60%
7.	How many times do you visit the reading corner in a week?	Not enough from 327%	
		times	
		More than 3 times 67%	
		Every day	6%

Based on the table above, it can be explained that in statement 1, is there a reading corner in the classroom, 100% of students answered yes. Statement 2, 67% of students answered yes and 33% of students answered no. Statement 3, 100% of students answered yes and 0% of students answered no. Statement 4, 0% of students answered yes and 100% of students answered no. Statement 5, 0% of students answered yes and 100% of students answered no. Statement 5, 0% of students answered no. While in statement no. 7, the indicator of less than 3 times visiting the reading corner for 1 week is 27%. The indicator of more than 3 times visiting the reading corner in a week is 67%, the indicator of every day visiting the reading corner is 6%.

The reading literacy culture of grade VII students of private junior high schools in East Nusa Tenggara, based on the results of filling out the questionnaire, is still relatively low. There are several significant challenges, although there is potential that can be developed. Based on the theory of reading interest according to Arinda (Dianingrum, 2021), the indicator of reading pleasure is an important aspect. However, the data shows that most students feel bored when reading. This indicates that reading activities have not been able to become a pleasant or meaningful experience for the majority of students. This situation can be caused by a lack of variation in reading materials or a monotonous literacy approach. In this context, creating an interactive and creative reading atmosphere, such as providing reading that is relevant to students' daily lives or integrating technology, is an important step to increase reading pleasure.

Students' awareness of the benefits of reading, which is included in the second indicator, also shows less than optimal results. Although 67% of students are aware of the importance of reading, 37% only consider it quite important. When the reasons for reading are explored, 17% of students read for entertainment, while 67% do so to increase knowledge. The high number of reading for entertainment shows that students are more motivated by emotional needs than intellectual ones. This can be used as an opportunity by introducing entertaining reading materials that are also informative, such as historical novels, science-based short stories, or popular articles.

The third indicator, namely reading frequency, shows a more fundamental problem. As many as 33% of students only read less than three times a week, and no students read every day. This low frequency indicates a lack of reading habits as part of their daily routine. In the indicator of the quantity of reading sources, most students rely on personal books (50%) and library books (50%) as their main reading sources, while no students use the internet because the location of SMPS St. Petrus Lokatadho is in an area outside the internet network. In this context, the library can act as a literacy center by providing varied, interesting, and relevant reading materials to students' needs.

Of the four indicators of reading interest (1) reading pleasure (2) awareness of the benefits of reading, (3) reading frequency and (4) quantity of reading sources. There is only one indicator that is fulfilled, namely awareness of the benefits of reading. The existence of low reading interest results in the class, the researcher wants to know how the results of the reading corner that has been established meet the indicators of achieving its use in improving the culture of reading literacy in class VII students of Private Middle Schools in East Nusa Tenggara. Research by Setiawati and Mahmud (2020) revealed that planning a reading corner involves two main stages: first, preparing a reading corner program with the principal, including the provision of facilities such as books and reading rooms; second, implementation in each class corner, including the use of reading corners in learning, reading hours, and providing a pleasant reading environment. This planning is the initial step that involves the entire school community to ensure that the reading corner can be utilized optimally.

The existence of a reading corner in class VII of a private junior high school in East Nusa Tenggara has been achieved well. This is an important foundation in building a culture of literacy in the school environment. The existence of an adequate collection of library materials in the reading corner provides direct access for students to read, while creating a supportive literacy environment. As stated by Rahmi et al., (2024), the availability of an adequate collection of reading materials aims to introduce students to various types of reading sources as a means of supporting learning.

Reading corners help increase students' reading frequency. Students will find it easier to get reading materials so that students will read more often (Pahera, 2024). Students' reading frequency has increased significantly, as seen from the results of the reading interest questionnaire which previously showed that most students read less than three times a week, has now increased to more than three times a week. However, daily visits to the reading corner are still low, so additional strategies are needed to encourage daily reading habits, such as a "reading hour" program or awards for students who consistently read every day.

Overall, the reading corner in VII Private Junior High Schools in East Nusa Tenggara has made a positive initial contribution to student literacy, especially in providing access to library materials and increasing reading frequency. However, challenges in management, learning integration, and literacy communication require a more strategic approach to achieve sustainable optimization of the benefits of reading corners. With improvements in these aspects, reading corners can be an effective means of building a culture of literacy among students. The implementation of reading corners in the classroom has proven to be successful in increasing students' interest in reading, as seen from the results of the questionnaire which showed an increase in reading frequency. Before the reading corner, initial questionnaire data showed that most students read less than three times a week. However, after the reading corner was implemented, many students began to read more than three times a week. This shows a significant increase in reading activity. This increase can be focused on the existence of reading corners that provide easy access to diverse, interesting, and relevant reading materials to students' interests. In addition, regular collection updates ensure that students remain interested in exploring reading. The weakness of this study is that some students still

have less interest in reading habits and students who are still weak in carrying out the discussion process after reading.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the reading corner program in secondary schools is effective in increasing students' interest in reading. Several factors that influence the effectiveness of this program are the availability of quality reading materials, the comfort of the reading corner, active participation of teachers and students, and support from stakeholders. Several problems that cause students to be less interested in reading include the lack of adequate library facilities, technological developments, inadequate teaching methods and teachers not forcing students to read books, an unsupportive learning environment, limited number of books/reading materials. Reading materials are less interesting, students and parents are less aware of the importance of reading, and lack of learning experiences outside the classroom. Therefore, schools must implement a reading corner program and its support to ensure its success. This program can help students become more interested in reading, improve literacy skills, and help school libraries cultivate reading habits.

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