

Implementing Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy in the Early Grades of Primary School

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Abstract: Literacy culture and digital literacy are crucial in shaping students' early learning experiences. This study aims to describe literacy culture and digital literacy activities in the early grades while identifying the supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, with data validity ensured through triangulation. The research was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember, East Java. The findings reveal that literacy culture is fostered through activities such as establishing reading corners, reading books before lessons begin, and providing a school library. Digital literacy is integrated through the use of an E-Library and various digital learning tools employed by teachers. Several supporting factors contribute to the success of these initiatives, including the school's role in providing infrastructure and the students' interest in reading. However, challenges remain, such as incomplete infrastructure, lack of parental support, and an unsupportive environment. These findings highlight the importance of institutional support and community involvement in enhancing literacy culture and digital literacy from an early age. Strengthening these aspects can significantly contribute to students' cognitive and social development in an increasingly digital era.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Literacy Culture, Reading Activity

How to Cite: Aprilia, E. F. (2025). Implementing Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy in the Early Grades of Primary School. *Jurnal Reviu Pendidikan Dasar: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Hasil Penelitian*, 11(1), 23-xx. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jrpd.v11n1.p23-39>

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Article Info:

Received: 21 August 2024; Accepted: 9 February 2025; Published Online: 28 February 2025

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental activity for acquiring knowledge, fostering critical thinking, and expanding one's perspective (Halim, 2024). Through reading, individuals can explore new ideas and gain a deeper understanding of various topics. However, despite its benefits, reading is still perceived as a monotonous activity, leading to low awareness and enthusiasm for literacy. Studies indicate that reading interest in Indonesia has remained low over the years (Senen et al., 2021). This issue has far-reaching implications, particularly in students' ability to write and comprehend texts. The literacy crisis in Indonesia significantly affects students' critical thinking skills, making it difficult for them to understand and interpret reading materials effectively (Anisa et al., 2021). The 2019 PISA report ranked Indonesia 74th in reading ability, with a score of 371, placing the country among the lowest-performing nations in literacy (Hanushek et al., 2019).

The low interest in reading among Indonesian students highlights a critical gap in literacy education. Recognizing this issue, the Indonesian government has implemented various policies to cultivate a culture of literacy. Law No. 3 of 2017 on the book system mandates the development of a literacy culture among Indonesian citizens. Additionally, Law No. 23 of 2015 from the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes character development through reading habits, including a 15-minute reading session before learning. In response, the Ministry of Education and Culture, through the Language and Book Development Agency, has increased the availability of reading materials in schools and educational communities. Despite these efforts, schools still face challenges in fostering a strong literacy culture, requiring further research on its implementation and effectiveness.

Building early reading interest is crucial for developing lifelong reading habits. Fostering reading interest in young learners is a fundamental step toward improving literacy skills (Andini et al., 2024). Reading is not merely an activity but also a skill that enhances academic achievement and cognitive development. Students who develop reading habits tend to be more attentive and engaged in class (Salma, 2019). Moreover, literacy extends beyond reading and writing to encompass listening, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Muniroh et al., 2018). These aspects of literacy are essential for navigating an increasingly complex and information-driven world.

The school literacy movement (GLS) aims to instill literacy habits in students as part of character education. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 13 of 2015, literacy culture is essential for fostering critical thinking and instilling a habit of reading and writing. The primary goal of literacy culture is to build reading interest and promote reading activities (Lubis, 2020). By integrating literacy practices into daily school routines, students develop analytical skills and a deeper appreciation for knowledge. However, while schools have made efforts to implement literacy programs, various challenges hinder their effectiveness, necessitating further exploration of supporting and inhibiting factors.

In addition to traditional literacy, digital literacy has become increasingly important in modern education. UNESCO defines digital literacy as the ability to use information and communication technology (ICT) to find, evaluate, and create information while fostering cognitive, ethical, and social-emotional skills. Digital-based literacy offers students access to information quickly and efficiently, enhancing their learning experiences. However, without proper guidance, students may misuse technology, leading to distractions or exposure to inappropriate content (Throuvala et al., 2021). Therefore, it is essential to implement structured digital literacy programs that help students maximize the benefits of technology for educational purposes.

Teachers play a vital role in fostering digital literacy among students. As facilitators of learning, teachers must be equipped with digital competencies to engage students effectively. Implementing digital literacy in education is crucial for preparing students to face the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Toharudin et al., 2021). By integrating technology into the curriculum, teachers can develop students' creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, students need digital literacy skills to compete in an increasingly digitalized world (Wiguna & Sudarti, 2024). Schools must provide adequate resources and training to ensure that both teachers and students can effectively navigate the digital landscape.

Despite various studies on literacy culture and digital literacy, there remains a gap in understanding their implementation in early grade education. Previous research has primarily focused on general literacy trends or secondary education, leaving a lack of comprehensive studies on how young learners develop literacy habits. This study aims to fill that gap by examining literacy culture and digital literacy activities in early grades

while identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation. By analyzing these aspects, the research seeks to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to enhance literacy programs and ensure their sustainability in schools.

METHODS

This research was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember, East Java, to describe the implementation of literacy culture and digital literacy in the lower grades. The approach used was descriptive qualitative with a case study research type, which enabled the researcher to explore in depth the literacy practices in the primary school environment. The case study was chosen to understand the phenomenon holistically and contextually according to the real conditions in the field.

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were made to directly observe literacy activities in the classroom, the involvement of teachers and students, and the facilities that support literacy activities. Interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and principals to gain deeper insights into the literacy practices implemented, challenges faced, and strategies used. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect written evidence such as school policies, lesson plans, and photos of literacy activities.

To maintain data validity, this research uses triangulation techniques, namely by comparing the results of various data collection techniques and sources of information. Triangulation was done by matching findings from observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure data validity and reliability. This technique enabled researchers to obtain a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the condition of literacy culture in the schools studied.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman (1992) model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction was done by filtering and simplifying the information obtained to make it more relevant to the research focus. Data presentation was carried out in the form of narrative descriptions and tables to provide a clearer picture of the research results. The final stage is conclusion drawing, which is carried out through a verification process to ensure that the findings produced can be accounted for academically.

The research instruments were developed based on the conceptual framework of literacy and digital literacy. The observation instruments were designed to observe the

pattern of students' literacy activities and the role of teachers in guiding these activities. The interview instrument was structured with a list of open-ended questions to allow informants to provide exploratory answers related to their experiences and challenges in implementing literacy. Meanwhile, the documentation instrument included an analysis of school policies, lesson plans, and the use of digital media in literacy activities. With this systematic approach, this study is expected to provide in-depth insights into literacy practices at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember and provide recommendations for other schools in developing more effective literacy programs.

RESULTS

Implementation of Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy in the Early Grades in Increasing Reading Interest of Early Grade Students of SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember

The findings of this study indicate that SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has implemented both literacy culture and digital literacy in the early grades, with literacy culture accounting for 60% and digital literacy at 40%. The school has taken significant steps to foster reading and writing skills from an early age by providing book corners in each classroom, an offline library, and an e-library. These efforts are supported by reading habits before lessons begin, aimed at increasing students' interest in reading. However, the implementation of literacy culture remains suboptimal due to several challenges, including limited teacher awareness, particularly among elderly teachers who struggle with integrating digital literacy into their teaching practices.

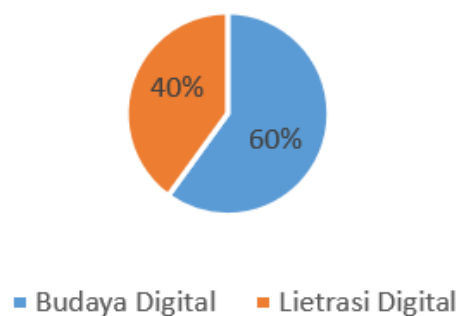


Figure 1. Percentage of Literate Culture and Digital Literacy

Despite these challenges, SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has made strategic efforts to enhance literacy skills by providing a well-equipped library with a diverse collection of

books, including lesson-related stories, fiction, and non-fiction. In addition, the presence of an e-library allows students to access books digitally, promoting reading habits beyond the school environment. The integration of digital literacy remains at a basic level, as it considers students' developmental stages and the need for gradual adaptation to technology-based learning. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of developmental appropriateness in digital literacy integration but contrasts with research that highlights the rapid adoption of digital platforms in urban schools.



Figure 2. Reading Activity 15 Minutes Before Learning

To support digital literacy, SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has equipped early-grade classrooms with digital tools such as projectors, televisions, and laptops. The availability of a computer lab further enhances students' access to digital resources. The findings reveal that students demonstrate increased engagement and enthusiasm when using technology, particularly when reading simple online information and accessing the school's e-library. However, some early grade teachers encounter difficulties in utilizing digital resources, particularly those who require additional training in using laptops and projectors effectively. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that teacher competency is a key factor in the successful implementation of digital literacy.

Furthermore, the use of projectors in early grade learning has facilitated digital literacy by enabling the display of videos, images, and online reading materials. The e-library, accessible via the school's website, serves as a valuable resource, though its limited availability on mobile platforms restricts accessibility. SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember's efforts in integrating digital literacy align with the broader trend of incorporating technology into primary education. However, compared to previous studies that highlight fully digitalized learning environments, the school's approach remains in a transitional phase, balancing traditional literacy methods with gradual digital integration.



Figure 3. Learning Activities Using Electronic Creative Teaching Education

Overall, the implementation of literacy culture and digital literacy at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember demonstrates a structured yet evolving approach. While the school has provided adequate facilities and strategies, the effectiveness of digital literacy integration is hindered by teacher readiness and technological adaptation. These findings suggest that targeted teacher training and further digital resource development are necessary to optimize digital literacy in the early grades. Future research could explore comparative studies with other schools that have successfully overcome similar challenges, providing insights into best practices for digital literacy implementation in primary education.

Supporting Factors for Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember

The findings of this study indicate that SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has implemented a strong literacy culture through various facilities and programs. The school provides both online and offline libraries, reading corners in each early-grade classroom, and a mandatory 15-minute reading session at the beginning of every lesson.



Figure 4. Library Room of SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember

These initiatives aim to foster students' reading interest from an early age. The offline library is well-stocked with illustrated and colored books that appeal to young learners,

while the online library enhances accessibility by allowing students, teachers, and parents to access learning materials anytime and anywhere. Fun learning activities conducted in the library further support the development of reading habits, subtly stimulating students' engagement in literacy practices.



Figure 5. Online Library at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember

A key factor supporting digital literacy at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember is its online library, which plays a significant role in involving parents in the learning process. The availability of digital books enables students and parents to access educational materials without time and place constraints, creating opportunities for learning beyond school hours. Unlike previous studies that focus on school-based digital literacy programs, this research highlights the integration of family involvement, emphasizing the role of parents in facilitating students' access to digital resources. Furthermore, the school's approach ensures inclusivity by providing free access to digital materials, making learning resources more available to students from diverse economic backgrounds.

The implementation of digital literacy in early grades is further supported by the use of projectors as instructional media. Projectors serve as an effective tool for visually presenting learning materials, thereby enhancing students' comprehension. Teachers utilize projectors to display educational videos sourced from platforms such as Electronic Creative Teaching Education, making lessons more interactive and engaging. This approach differs from previous research that primarily examines digital literacy through individual screen-based learning; instead, SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember adopts a collective and interactive method, incorporating visual and auditory learning experiences that accommodate diverse student learning styles.



Figure 6. Use of Technology to Support Digital Literacy

Additionally, the integration of projectors and digital educational resources allows teachers to provide contextualized and visually enriched explanations, which support knowledge retention and deeper understanding. The combination of technology and active teacher involvement differentiates this study's findings from research emphasizing independent digital learning. While previous studies suggest that digital literacy is often hindered by limited technological adaptation among teachers, SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has taken proactive measures to address this challenge by integrating digital tools within traditional instructional strategies, ensuring a balanced transition toward a technology-supported learning environment.

Overall, the findings reveal that SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember is gradually integrating digital literacy into its teaching practices while maintaining a strong foundation in traditional literacy culture. The school's approach demonstrates a structured yet evolving strategy that incorporates family engagement, visual-based learning, and free access to digital resources. Future research could further explore comparative studies with schools that have successfully implemented fully digitalized learning environments, providing deeper insights into best practices for digital literacy integration in primary education.

Factors Inhibiting Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember

The findings of this study indicate that SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has made significant efforts in fostering a literacy culture, particularly in the early grades. Initiatives such as the establishment of a school library, the implementation of a 15-minute reading activity before lessons, and the presence of reading corners in each classroom reflect the school's commitment to enhancing students' reading habits. These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of early literacy exposure in shaping students'

reading interests. However, despite these efforts, challenges remain in optimizing literacy engagement among students.

One major inhibiting factor is the underutilization of literacy facilities. While the library and classroom reading corners provide easy access to books, observations reveal that many students do not fully utilize these resources. This limited engagement could be attributed to a lack of motivation and guidance from teachers or insufficient awareness among students regarding the importance of reading. Additionally, the 15-minute pre-learning reading activity is often ineffective, as students do not consistently engage in meaningful reading during this period. This finding contrasts with previous studies that suggest structured and guided reading sessions lead to higher literacy engagement.

Another challenge relates to the physical and environmental aspects of the literacy facilities. The library's limited space may restrict students' ability to comfortably access reading materials, and classroom reading corners may not be designed in a way that fosters an inviting reading environment. This finding suggests that simply providing access to books is not enough; creating a comfortable and engaging reading space is equally essential to encourage literacy habits. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on book availability, this research highlights the need for a holistic approach that includes both infrastructure and student engagement strategies.

Furthermore, digital literacy implementation faces constraints due to varying levels of technological proficiency among teachers. Specifically, some senior teachers struggle with effectively integrating digital tools into classroom instruction. Their limited familiarity with technology reduces the effectiveness of digital literacy programs, which contrasts with previous studies that assume digital integration is solely a matter of access rather than teacher readiness. Addressing this challenge requires continuous professional development programs, peer mentoring, and targeted support to ensure all educators can confidently incorporate technology into their teaching practices.

In conclusion, while SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has demonstrated a strong commitment to literacy culture, several inhibiting factors—such as underutilized literacy resources, inadequate reading environments, and technological barriers among teachers—remain. These findings emphasize the importance of a multi-faceted approach to literacy development that includes both structural improvements and capacity-building initiatives. Future research should explore strategies for increasing student engagement in reading

activities and enhancing teachers' digital competencies to further strengthen literacy culture in primary schools.

DISCUSSION

Implementation of Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy in Increasing Interest in Reading

The findings of this study highlight the significant efforts made by SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember in fostering a literacy culture, particularly through the implementation of reading activities, the provision of libraries and reading corners, and the integration of digital literacy. These initiatives align with national policies, such as Law No. 3 of 2017 on the Book System and Permendikbud No. 23 of 2015, which emphasize the importance of literacy development from an early age. However, despite these efforts, several challenges remain that hinder the optimal implementation of literacy culture, particularly in terms of infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and student engagement.

One of the key factors affecting the effectiveness of literacy initiatives is the availability and utilization of facilities. The presence of a library and reading corners has provided students with access to reading materials, but their usage remains suboptimal. There is a need for a literacy-rich environment to support the successful implementation of literacy programs (Aryani & Purnomo, 2023). The study suggests that the school should enhance the accessibility and appeal of these facilities, ensuring that they create a comfortable and engaging reading environment. A well-maintained and diverse library collection plays a crucial role in increasing students' interest in reading (Mujahidin et al., 2022). Therefore, additional investment in expanding library resources and improving its usability could significantly contribute to fostering a stronger reading habit among students.

Another critical issue is the limited integration of digital literacy due to the technological unfamiliarity of some teachers, particularly senior educators. The necessity of integrating digital literacy into all subjects to enhance students' digital competencies (Rafi et al., 2019). The reluctance or inability of some teachers to effectively use digital tools can hinder the school's efforts to modernize its literacy programs. To address this issue, ongoing professional development and mentorship programs should be provided to equip teachers with the necessary digital skills. Collaboration between tech-savvy

educators and those less experienced with technology can facilitate a smoother transition into digital-based learning and improve instructional quality (Ajisoka et al., 2024).

In addition to teacher-related challenges, the effectiveness of the 15-minute reading activity before learning begins is another area of concern. Such activities can enhance students' reading interest, but their actual implementation often lacks consistency and engagement (Utami et al., 2024). This indicates that simply allocating time for reading is insufficient; rather, schools must adopt more interactive and structured approaches to sustain students' motivation. Strategies such as guided reading sessions, book discussions, and peer reading groups may enhance the effectiveness of these reading initiatives.

The integration of digital literacy into various subjects also offers promising potential for enhancing students' learning experiences. Digital literacy can improve students' ability to access and critically evaluate information, making learning more interactive and meaningful (Muljanto et al., 2024; Sunarmintyastuti et al., 2022). In subjects such as mathematics and Indonesian language studies, incorporating educational applications, e-books, and online resources can support the development of both literacy and technological skills. Schools should, therefore, take strategic steps to ensure that digital tools are effectively utilized in the classroom setting.

In conclusion, while SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has taken commendable steps to cultivate a literacy culture, challenges remain in terms of infrastructure, teacher readiness, and student participation. To overcome these obstacles, the school must focus on optimizing the use of literacy facilities, providing continuous digital literacy training for teachers, and enhancing reading engagement strategies. These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of a well-structured literacy environment and teacher preparedness in fostering a sustainable reading culture. Future research could explore the long-term impact of these literacy initiatives and investigate additional strategies to further improve literacy engagement in primary schools.

Supporting Factors for Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy

The findings indicate that the implementation of literacy culture at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember, particularly in the early grades, is significantly influenced by the school community's awareness and commitment to fostering reading habits. The provision of infrastructure, such as libraries, reading corners, and media works like *mading*, plays a

crucial role in creating an environment that encourages literacy. These findings align with the objectives outlined in the introduction, which emphasize the importance of early literacy cultivation as mandated by national policies. The integration of structured reading activities, such as the 15-minute reading initiative before lessons, has been instrumental in shaping students' reading habits. The effectiveness of structured reading routines in increasing students' interest in reading (Utami et al., 2024).

Moreover, the study highlights the role of parents as a key factor in sustaining literacy culture beyond the school environment. Parental involvement in providing books and monitoring children's reading habits at home reinforces the literacy skills acquired at school. A literacy-rich environment, both at school and at home, enhances students' engagement with reading materials (Aryani & Purnomo, 2023). However, despite these positive aspects, challenges such as limited access to books and varying levels of parental support remain areas for further improvement.

In addition to traditional literacy, digital literacy has emerged as a crucial aspect of students' learning experiences. The availability of an e-library and online-based learning resources at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember provides students with greater flexibility in accessing educational materials. This innovation aligns with the growing emphasis on digital literacy in education, which suggests that integrating digital literacy into the curriculum enhances students' technological competencies (Asmayawati et al., 2024). The presence of Electronic Creative Teaching Education (ECTE), a digital repository of teaching materials, further facilitates an interactive and engaging learning process. These digital interventions support the idea that technological integration in education can enhance accessibility and learning outcomes (Sunarmintyastuti et al., 2022).

Despite these advancements, challenges persist, particularly regarding equitable access to digital resources. The study reveals that not all students have equal access to digital devices, which may hinder the full implementation of digital literacy programs. The importance of ensuring digital literacy is inclusive and accessible to all students (Radovanović et al., 2020). Additionally, while parental support is vital in facilitating digital literacy at home, varying levels of digital proficiency among parents may impact the effectiveness of these efforts. Addressing these challenges requires continuous training for educators and increased investment in digital infrastructure to bridge the digital divide.

In conclusion, the study reinforces the significance of fostering both traditional and digital literacy to prepare students for the evolving demands of the educational landscape. While SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has successfully implemented various literacy programs, ongoing efforts are needed to address challenges related to access and infrastructure. Future research could explore strategies to enhance parental involvement and the role of government policies in supporting comprehensive literacy development. By strengthening these initiatives, schools can continue to cultivate a culture of literacy that equips students with the skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Factors Inhibiting Literacy Culture and Digital Literacy at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember

One of the key challenges in fostering a literacy culture in early grades is the suboptimal implementation of the 15-minute reading activity before lessons begin. While this initiative aims to build reading habits among students, its execution still requires improvement to ensure consistent engagement and effectiveness. Additionally, the placement of reading corners in early grade classrooms needs to be more strategically designed to create a comfortable and inviting space for young learners to access books easily. Research suggests that a well-structured reading environment significantly influences children's motivation to read (Aryani & Purnomo, 2023). Therefore, optimizing the placement of literacy infrastructure in classrooms can enhance students' reading interest and reinforce literacy habits from an early age.

In terms of digital literacy, a major inhibiting factor is the technological skills gap among senior teachers. Some educators in early grades struggle with operating digital tools such as projectors and computers, limiting the effective integration of digital literacy into the curriculum. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that teachers' digital competence plays a crucial role in successful technology adoption in education (Méndez et al., 2023). Addressing this challenge requires targeted professional development programs that equip teachers with the necessary digital skills to create interactive and engaging learning experiences. By providing continuous training and technical support, schools can bridge the digital literacy gap among educators, ensuring that technology-based literacy initiatives effectively support student learning.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of literacy culture and digital literacy in the early grades at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Jember has been a strategic effort to enhance students' interest in reading through various initiatives, including reading corners, libraries, and digital resources such as the E-Library. The school's commitment to fostering literacy is evident in the awareness of the school community, the availability of supportive facilities, and active parental involvement. However, challenges such as the suboptimal placement of reading corners for early grade students and the limited technological skills of some senior teachers in operating digital tools highlight areas for improvement. Addressing these issues is crucial for optimizing literacy culture and digital literacy programs. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on early-grade literacy development by emphasizing the importance of well-structured reading environments and continuous teacher training in digital literacy. Future research should explore innovative pedagogical approaches and technological interventions to further enhance literacy engagement among young learners.

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