

Optimizing the Role of Libraries to Strengthening Literacy at MIN 1 Surabaya

Nurul Vita Sari^{1*}, Juhaeni², Uswatun Chasanah³

¹²³ Universitas Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia

*Email correspondence: nurulvita37@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Literacy serves as a crucial foundation for students' academic success and personal development, particularly at the elementary education level. This study aims to analyze the role of the library at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Surabaya in supporting student literacy development. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this research examines literacy programs, resource availability, and perceptions of students and teachers regarding the library's function as a literacy center. The findings indicate that the MIN 1 Surabaya library implements various strategic initiatives, such as providing diverse reading collections, the "Read 15 Minutes" program, and digital literacy introductions, which significantly enhance students' reading interest and literacy skills. However, challenges related to the optimal utilization of information technology, collection updates, and limited human resources still need to be addressed to maximize the library's role. This research provides practical recommendations for developing the library as an effective literacy center in madrasahs.

Keywords: student Literacy; MIN 1 Surabaya; library roles; school Library

1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy, in a broader context, refers not only to the ability to read and write, but also includes the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use information effectively in various formats and contexts (Ishtiaq, 2019). In this era of rapidly developing information, literacy skills are an essential prerequisite for individuals to actively participate in society, contribute to economic development, and continue lifelong learning (Mujtahid et al., 2021). Basic education, especially Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), plays a central role in laying the foundations for this literacy.

School libraries are often considered the heart of the school and have great potential to become effective learning resource centers and literacy incubators (Ernst, 2023). The existence of active libraries and integrated literacy programs is believed to stimulate students' interest in reading, improve their understanding of texts, and develop relevant information literacy skills (Tamat et al., 2021). Previous research (Sonia & Sobri, 2019) has consistently shown a positive correlation between the existence of an

active school library and an increase in student literacy achievement, including reading interest and text comprehension. These studies show that investment in library facilities and programs has a real impact on the quality of education.

However, based on preliminary observations and interviews with several teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 1 Surabaya, several issues related to optimizing the role of the library were identified. Although the school library is available, student participation in library activities is still lacking, and many students tend to use the library only for school assignments, not for free reading activities. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs shows that the average literacy score of madrasah students in several cities still needs to be improved, creating an urgency to specifically examine how institutions such as MIN 1 Surabaya can maximize existing resources (Kementerian Agama RI, 2023). Thus, this study aims to fill this gap.

This study has novelty value by providing specific insights in the context of madrasahs, which have unique characteristics that differ from public schools. Unlike previous studies such as (Sonia & Sobri 2019), which emphasized the role of libraries as learning resource centers in public schools, and (Ranem et al. 2022), which examined public elementary school libraries, this study focuses on the context of public madrasahs, which have an Islamic vision and integrate religious values into their literacy programs. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to provide a new perspective that has not been widely discussed in previous literature.

The distinctive characteristics of madrasahs lie in the integration of general education and Islamic religious education, which emphasizes the formation of morals, spirituality, and Islamic values (Ridhokusumo et al., 2024). In the context of literacy, madrasahs not only focus on the ability to read and write academic texts, but also on strengthening religious literacy through Islamic reading sources (Fahmi, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to analyze in depth the role of the MIN 1 Surabaya library in supporting student literacy, including programs, resources, and the perceptions of stakeholders (students, teachers, and librarians). This research has dual significance.

Theoretically, it is expected to enrich the body of knowledge regarding the role of school libraries in the context of Islamic education. Practically, the results of this study can provide input for schools, especially madrasah principals and librarians, to optimize more effective literacy programs. In addition, this research can also serve as a guide for other madrasahs that want to improve their literacy culture by optimizing their libraries. Based on the problems and urgency described above, this research will answer the following question: What is the role of the MIN 1 Surabaya library in supporting student literacy?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a qualitative method with a descriptive design. The qualitative method was chosen to obtain an in-depth and context-based understanding of the role of the MIN 1 Surabaya library in supporting literacy. The descriptive design aims to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of the population or area of interest accurately (Creswell, 2014). To obtain comprehensive and in-depth data, the researcher used several data collection techniques, namely interviews, observation, and documentation. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, library head, and teachers to obtain information related to literacy policies, programs implemented, the role of the library, and various challenges faced in managing and implementing literacy activities at the madrasah. Second, participatory observation was conducted directly in the library room of MIN 1 Surabaya to observe student activities in reading, interactions with librarians, use of facilities, and the implementation of

literacy programs such as library visit schedules, 15-minute reading programs, and digital literacy introduction. Third, a documentation study was used to examine official documents related to book collections, literacy program implementation reports, library activity schedules, and policies or regulations applicable in madrasahs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of MIN 1 Surabaya Library

The MIN 1 Surabaya Library is located in a strategic area of the school and has adequate facilities, including a comfortable reading room, a computer area, and a neatly organized collection storage area. Although the room is not very large, its efficient layout creates a conducive and attractive atmosphere for students to visit and read. The library is managed by a dedicated librarian, supported by several teachers assigned as literacy managers. This dual role demonstrates the school's commitment to supporting the library's function, although it also indicates potential challenges in terms of specialization and management intensity.

The collection at MIN 1 Surabaya consists of various types of reading materials, including fiction books (such as fairy tales, children's stories, and children's novels), non-fiction books (covering general knowledge, science, history, and religion), children's magazines, and several curriculum support references. The diversity of this collection demonstrates the library's efforts to meet the various interests and information needs of students in accordance with their level of basic education. In addition, the availability of several computers connected to the internet reinforces the library's role as a learning resource center that supports digital literacy and information retrieval, in line with the demands of 21st-century literacy.

Library Literacy Programs and Initiatives

The MIN 1 Surabaya Library has proactively implemented several key programs and initiatives designed to directly support student literacy development. These initiatives reflect the school's understanding of the importance of building a culture of reading from an early age:

1. **Scheduled Library Visits**

Each class has a specific schedule for regular visits to the library. During these sessions, students are encouraged to choose books that interest them, read on site, or borrow them to take home. Based on interviews with the head librarian, these visits are held once a week for 45 minutes for each class. The researcher's observations show that students appear enthusiastic about reading and discussing the contents of the books they have chosen. The library also actively assists teachers in the process of selecting reading materials and guiding students according to their interests. These visits are conducted regularly as part of the school's commitment to developing a culture of literacy ([Ranem et al., 2022](#)).

2. **"Read for 15 Minutes" Program**

This is a mandatory program carried out before lessons begin, in which students are required to read non-academic books for 15 minutes. This activity can be done in the classroom or in the library, with books that can be from the students' personal collections or the school library collection. This initiative is specifically designed to foster consistent reading habits and make it an integral part of students' daily routines, thereby increasing the time spent on reading activities. Introduction to Digital Literacy: In response to literacy needs in the digital age, librarians or teachers sometimes provide a basic introduction on how to search for information

on the internet safely and effectively. They also introduce relevant digital reading applications or platforms, equipping students with basic digital literacy skills that are increasingly important in accessing and processing modern information (Suprihatin, 2022).

Resource Availability and Utilization

In general, the collection at MIN 1 Surabaya Library is considered adequate for elementary school level. The availability of a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction books is a major strength. However, observations show that fiction books, especially illustrated children's stories, are the students' main favorites. This indicates a strong student preference for narrative and visual elements, which can be the basis for further collection development. Diversification of the collection and regular book updates are still urgent needs to maintain the relevance and appeal of the library in the eyes of students who are always looking for something new (Hermawan et al., 2020).

The use of computers in the library, although available and connected to the internet, has not been fully optimized for structured digital literacy activities. Computers are more often used for general searches than for activities specifically designed to improve digital literacy competencies, such as evaluating online information sources or producing digital content. The limited number of librarians is also a significant challenge in providing intensive and personalized assistance to all students, especially in activities that require special guidance such as advanced information searches or introduction to educational software. This is in line with research findings on human resource limitations in school libraries (Priatmana & Ritonga, 2023).

Student and Teacher Perceptions

1. Student Perceptions

Most students showed great enthusiasm for visiting the library. They enjoyed the freedom to choose books and the excitement of discovering new stories. Some students explicitly mentioned that the library was a quiet and comfortable place to read and study. This indicates that the library has succeeded in creating a positive environment for literacy activities. However, some students also expressed their hope for more new books and a wider variety of educational games in the library, indicating a desire for a more dynamic collection and more interactive activities. Students' interest in reading is generally good, especially for fiction and stories, which is a strong foundation for the development of sustainable literacy.

2. Teacher Perceptions

Teachers at MIN 1 Surabaya consistently acknowledge the important role of the library in supporting the learning process and the development of student literacy. They view the library as an integral strategic partner in implementing the school's literacy program (Dwi Aryani & Purnomo, 2023). Teachers hope that the library can continue to add to its collection of books that are relevant to the curriculum and students' interests, as well as provide training for teachers on how to integrate library resources into teaching and learning activities. This perception highlights the great potential for collaboration between teachers and librarians, which is considered essential to maximize the impact of the library in the school's educational ecosystem.

The results of this study strongly confirm that the MIN 1 Surabaya library plays a multifaceted and central role in fostering student literacy, in line with previous studies that emphasize the crucial role of school libraries as learning resource centers and literacy incubators. The library has successfully

fulfilled its role as a provider of access to a diverse collection of reading materials and has initiated several literacy programs relevant to the needs of elementary school students. The “15 Minutes of Reading” program and library visiting hours have proven effective in building consistent reading habits and instilling a literacy routine, which is an important foundation for the development of sustainable literacy. Students' high interest in fiction books also opens up opportunities for the development of collections that are more focused on this genre as a gateway to broader reading interests.

However, there are several areas that can be improved to optimize the role of libraries, particularly in supporting multiliteracy in the digital age. The optimization of information technology utilization in libraries to support digital literacy still requires further development. This includes the need for more structured training for students and librarians on how to use digital resources effectively, as well as the provision of more targeted digital content, not just general searches. Libraries can facilitate digital information evaluation skills, internet usage ethics, and even simple digital content production, in line with a more comprehensive concept of information literacy.

The importance of regularly updating and diversifying collections also needs to be a major concern. A dynamic collection that keeps up with students' interests will keep their motivation to read high. This can be achieved through regular surveys of students' reading interests and the purchase of new books that respond to current trends among children. Challenges related to the limited number of librarians also require innovative solutions, either through the addition of library management staff or by empowering teachers as literacy ambassadors who help manage and utilize the library more broadly (Distianti & Pramudyo, 2024).

Closer collaboration between librarians and teachers is also key to maximizing the impact of library literacy. Librarians can be valuable resources for teachers in integrating library resources into classroom teaching and learning activities, supporting student research projects, and developing literacy-based curricula. This synergy will ensure that the library functions not only as a book repository but also as an active learning center that is fully integrated into the educational process at MIN 1 Surabaya, as emphasized in the literature on the importance of librarian-teacher collaboration (Fachri et al., 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on an in-depth analysis of the role of the MIN 1 Surabaya library in supporting student literacy development, this study concludes that the library has functioned as an effective and multifaceted literacy center. With a diverse collection of reading materials, including fiction, non-fiction, and digital resources, as well as strategic programs such as scheduled visiting hours and “15 Minutes of Reading,” the library has succeeded in increasing students' interest in reading, text comprehension skills, and information literacy skills. Positive perceptions from students and teachers confirm that the conducive library environment has fostered a culture of reading from an early age, in line with the characteristics of Islamic education in madrasahs. However, despite significant contributions, challenges such as suboptimal utilization of information technology, limited human resources, and the need for regular collection updates still hinder the library's maximum potential as a comprehensive literacy incubator. Overall, the MIN 1 Surabaya library is not only the heart of basic education but also a crucial foundation for equipping students with 21st-century literacy skills, which ultimately support their academic and personal success.

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