

Early Literacy Practice in Kindergartens in West Sumatra Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the practice of introducing literacy in Kindergarten in rural areas in the city of Solok, West Sumatra province, Indonesia. From the literature study, it shows that there is still limited research on literacy development practices in rural areas in West Sumatra. The research question that will be investigated is: "how do teachers involve and introduce and engage literacy to *children*". This study uses a qualitative approach and the data were collected by observation, document analysis and teacher interviews. Data from the study revealed that in the rural area of South Solok Regency in West Sumatra, it was found that teachers developed literacy in Kindergarten with various methods and media. The study shows that literacy *activities are carried* out dominantly through playing and storytelling activities. The media used in literacy development are printed media such as books and pictures. However, using technology in developing literacy is still limited. Teachers prefer to use printed media such as books, picture cards in introducing literacy to children rather than using technology. Lack of availability of ICT technology is shown as the obstacle to *using* ICT for literacy activities in the *kindergartens*. The Movement of Ministry of Education with literacy program (Gerakan literasi Sekolah) are less supported by computers and ICT facilities lead to limited taught technology literacy in Solok region therefore it is recommended that the *stakeholders* prioritize rural areas to be considered in the provision of assistance for the development facilities to support literacy programs since early childhood by providing aid and facilities for ICT technology in kindergartens.

Keywords: Literacy, Early literacy program, Kindergartens

1. INTRODUCTION

During Pandemic covid 19 was a difficult time for communities around the world. The covid 19 pandemic that had spread from Wuhan China shook the world and affected all aspects of life including in the world of early childhood education. Early childhood education during Covid 19 has challenges in the implementation of developmental activities and early childhood development [1]. Children need to be given proper stimulation so that their development can be developed optimally. Literacy, which is a language development activity carried out from an early age needs to be a concern for early childhood educators and parents in the process of implementation and development activities in early childhood education.

Literacy is a basic skill that is very important in the future. Several studies have explored literacy and regard early literacy as a necessary skill for later literacy development ([2]; [3]; [4]). Human knowledge will be developed through reading, sharing information through written material. It is hoped that in the future, human resources who are literate and have the intelligence and

critical thinking to face global challenges. Indonesia's constitution (1994) supports the importance of educating the public to improve the quality of the nation and this is the goal of the Indonesian government.

Literacy is crucial in human life. Having low literacy skills can contribute to a country's economy [5] explains that having low literacy skills or becoming illiterate can be detrimental to the economy, health and security stability of a country. The economic quality and prosperity of a country depends on the extent to which its citizens are literate. Both education experts, UNESCO international policy and Indonesia's national policy with government programs in the school literacy movement (GLS) program agree that literacy is an important skill that needs to be introduced and developed from an early age.

Data from PISA (Program for International Students Assessment) shows that Indonesia had a lower literacy level in 2015 which is ranked 64, with a score of about 394 [6]. PISA 2018 explains that 7 out of 10 students have a minimum literacy score. Furthermore, the Indonesian Ministry of National Education as quoted by

[7] describes IEA data on reading and writing skills. The results of the study found that the reading comprehension of 6th grade children is very low. The survey showed unsophisticated results that showed 50% of children could not write. Students learn to memorize concepts rather than practice. The data shows that Indonesia needs serious efforts to improve the quality of literacy. Therefore, the introduction of literacy is very important, especially from an early age.

Given the importance of literacy for life, the Indonesian government undertook literacy efforts and designed a literacy action program in Indonesian schools called the School Literacy Movement. Early age is a better time in human life to introduce literacy and the age of the emergence of literacy. One of the reasons for the introduction of early literacy is to introduce literacy at an early age (ages 5 to 6). Early literacy includes phonological awareness, reading, and communication. Literacy skills include early reading; recognizing simple letters, words, and writing such as scribbling, writing simple words, and communicating to others. Early literacy in preschool can support children's literacy learning in Primary School.

This study seeks to study the practice of Kindergarten teachers in introducing literacy in West Sumatra. Because there are no research studies on early literacy practices in rural areas in West Sumatra, Indonesia, this study is appropriate to fill the gaps or opportunities of this research to investigate early literacy practices in small town areas in the city of Solok, West Sumatra. Therefore, this study investigates literacy practices in two Kindergartens in Solok city. The research question that will be examined is: "how teachers involve and introduce early literacy in children".

1.1. The Emergent of Literacy

Literacy in general can be defined as literacy or being able to read and write. Literacy is a basic skill in life. The development of science and technology is influenced by literacy skills. In other words, literacy skills such as the ability to read and write can be a bridge to improve and gain knowledge. Reading is a basic skill to improve knowledge and life skills.

Early literacy is known as the primary attention in early childhood. Early literacy according to [8] includes various skills such as recognizing the alphabet, phonological awareness, understanding symbols and communication skills. [9] explain that children's early reading can be developed through reading e-books. E-books provide interactive reading materials for children.

Considering literacy arises because early literacy skills contribute to future academic success [10]. Lonigan et al agree that one's academic success is determined by literacy ability. Human resources who have the ability to be literate can have all the information in various sources both printed materials

and digital information. It is seen in society that those who are literate have ambitions for their future careers compared to those who are illiterate or do not have literacy skills. To be successful in literacy development according to.

1.2. The Program of Literacy Action in Indonesia

The Principal Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia (1945) rule 33 paragraph 3 or the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, states that the state of the Republic of Indonesia has the main purpose of educating all citizens to receive education. The Indonesian education system aims to increase the potential of human life such as intelligence, emotions, and spirituality through the provision of education for all citizens. In addition, in the paragraph in the Basic Regulations of the Republic of Indonesia (1945) it is explained that the Indonesian government develops science, science, technology, respecting religious values, and national unity in order to improve culture and human welfare. The need for literacy in the global era encourages the Indonesian government to facilitate and design literacy actions in schools and this can be started with an early literacy program in kindergartens.

Early Childhood education is the early support for child education and early literacy is emergent in early Education. The emergence of literacy in global life can lay the foundation for lifelong literacy programs [11]. Early literacy programs will be the basis for building further literacy for children in the future. Literacy learning can support children to learn life skills such as accessing and processing information and sharing information. It is widely known that literacy is the gateway to knowledge. Literacy will form quality and insightful human resources. Human resources in the future will be potential and skilled if they are literate.

The Indonesian government supports school literacy called the School Literacy Movement [12]. The Indonesian government as a stakeholder encourages schools to actively facilitate children's language and literacy development. The school literacy action, "School Literacy Movement" is expected to encourage all school staff including principals, teachers, decision makers, and the community, to collaborate to encourage community participation to improve children's and community literacy skills [13].

Introducing literacy in kindergartens can be assisted by using appropriate methods. Methods can be defined as a way of teaching. Teaching methods, tools for teaching in the classroom, are essential to learning success. Such methods can facilitate children to use their language skills and to share all the information they learn and gain in learning activities. The methods that can be used in literacy learning such as reading books, telling stories, playing games and conversational methods.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative design. Research setting in two kindergartens in Solok, West Sumatra. Data collection was done through observations and interviews. This study uses purposive sampling technique. Data collection methods are interviews, observations and document collection such as RPPH. Interviews were conducted directly with teachers at the Kindergarten teachers. Teachers in both Kindergartens were interviewed to obtain data on literacy teaching in Kindergartens. Teachers were asked about the methods, media used, and how long or how often teachers taught literacy in Kindergarten. Data collection and analysis was performed using [14] qualitative data analysis techniques such as "coding data, analyzing it for descriptions and themes, theme layers and interconnections, and reporting findings on research questions".

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are two Early Childhood Education centers that were observed and taken as a research setting. Both kindergartens are located in the village of Kota Solok in West Sumatra, Indonesia. One of the kindergartens is in the Gumanti Valley region. From my observations I obtained data that children have learned to write in ECE setting 1 in Solok. At this location, the teacher gives the children a box-shaped book for reading practice and gives examples of how to write, then the child imitates the teacher's writing. Children are asked to work independently, observing the teacher write and imitating his writing. After writing the words and names, the teacher reads the child's writing and comments and gives gifts and stars in appreciation of the child's efforts. This shows that the child enjoys learning and gets appreciation from his teacher.

Teachers at Kindergarten 1 teach children to read earlier. The reading material is related to the theme taught on that day. For example, the theme of animals, the teacher introduces some animals to the children. Before the lesson began, the children were asked about animals they knew and had experienced to play in their environment. These questions are useful for remembering their background knowledge. Then the teacher asks what animal begins with the letter A. The child says "Goose" or goose in Indonesian. Then the teacher guides the child to recognize each letter forming a Goose (G-O-O-S-E). The other day, the teacher introduced crops and fruits. The background of the child's knowledge of fruits is recalled by asking questions about what fruits the children have eaten. All the children mentioned papaya, rambutan, durian, duku, mango, watermelon, apple, pineapple, orange and apple. Then the teacher asks the children what starts with the sound 'A' or the letter 'A'. apple child answers (apple). Next the children were asked the letters that make up the word apple. With the teacher's guidance, the child

mentions and arranges the pieces of the alphabet A-P-E-L that the teacher has prepared.

From the interviews, it was found that the children in Kindergartens were taught early writing. Teachers teach writing by giving model words to children. Children independently imitate the words written by the teacher in a special box book. Some stars are given and written for children's writing. The star symbol is given in children's books in appreciation of their achievements and efforts. This action is useful to increase the child's motivation and participation in writing.

Children in both Kindergartens have a good interest in writing. However, it was also found that there are some children who are too lazy to practice early writing from an early age because the child enjoys playing with his friends. They do not participate in early writing activities. While some other children will be very happy if told to write letters, and enjoy scribbling as early writing stimulation.

Teachers have taught and introduced children's literacy, especially language literacy such as early reading and early writing. Early reading is supported through play activities. Children are introduced to the words, and the letters that make up the words are given in the theme lesson.

In Kindergarten in Setting 1, it shows that children like to write such as numbers, the alphabet or drawing or painting. Observations show that children like to write letters, numbers and pictures. Children love to write like writing letters, numbers and drawing.

Equipment and facilities in supporting the development of children's literacy in both Kindergartens are still lacking. Posters depicting letters and words on boards and pictures on the walls are limited and the facility should be added to increase children's passion and interest in reading that are plastered in front of their eyes on the classroom wall. The number of textbooks available in the classroom is also very small. Library facilities in both kindergartens do not exist. The lack of facilities and support in literacy can be an obstacle in developing children's interest in literacy and an obstacle for teachers in preparing their teaching materials.

In the learning practice found in both kindergartens, the teacher explained children were enthusiastic to learn writing although they only write letters and words. Children are less motivated in early reading activities. This phenomenon is different from writing activities that children do enthusiastically. Children appear bored and low -motivated and prefer to play rather than play and learn at the beginning of reading. In addition to introducing language literacy, teachers also build children to care for their health by teaching basic self -cleaning skills. The teacher described that the child's enthusiasm in writing assumes that if he has not written something, then the child has not assumed that he has not learned. The children were very enthusiastic in early writing. However, the early reading activities have not

yet been seen as the children's interest. The introduction of reading at this stage is just the introduction of letters, and the children quickly get bored.

Equipment and facilities in supporting the development of children's literacy in both Kindergartens are still lacking. Posters depicting letters and words on boards and pictures on the walls are not many, and these pictures should be added to increase children's passion and interest in reading that are plastered in front of their eyes on the classroom wall. The number of textbooks available in the classroom are also very limited. Library facilities in both kindergartens are unavailable. The lack of facilities and support in literacy can be an obstacle in developing children's interest in literacy and an obstacle for teachers in preparing their teaching materials. The media given by the teacher in introducing literacy to the children in the Early Childhood Education is facilitated with letter cards and pictures of letters that are pasted on the walls of the room. That way the child will see the shape of the letter and recognize the letters.

Children enjoy learning through play and learning literacy in this case must be interactive and immerse the child to play and learn at the same time. This can be seen from the observation when teachers teach literacy with conventional learning such as alphabet recognition, question and answer, explanation and activities that make children bored and less motivated in learning literacy.

Similar to the first kindergarten, In the second Kindergarten shows that teachers also teach language literacy in this kindergarten. However, children in Setting 2 are more important than writing. Children seem to be more enthusiastic and motivated in writing words with pictures. The children in this kindergarten count if they don't write letters or letters and the words they feel are doing nothing and not learning something. Children will be motivated if they have and are given writing activities such as writing words.

The learning media in the kindergarten on the second site are conventional in nature. Media such as letter cards are often used. The teacher teaches the letters using a variety of colorful cards. The cards are tailored to the teaching theme. If the teacher teaches an example of transportation, then the card given is the vocabulary of transportation. Children are given books to write and give cards and pictures of letters to children.

4. CONCLUSION

From the results of research on two different early childhood education, it can be concluded that in both early childhood education has introduced early literacy to children particularly engaging early reading, and writing. Children are given books to read. In the introduction of early literacy, teachers use pictorial and colorful letter cards to introduce letters and words. The use of ICT technology in introducing literacy has not been seen due to the limitations of facilities and infrastructure in ICT where research is conducted.

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