

Challenges and School Strategies in Improving Reading Literacy among Elementary School Students

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: reading literacy; school strategy; elementary school; School Literacy Movement; reading instruction.	This study aimed to analyze the challenges and school strategies for improving reading literacy among elementary school students in Pangkalan Kerinci District. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Participants included principals, vice principals, and teachers directly involved in literacy programs. The data were analyzed thematically through coding, theme grouping, and interpretation of findings. The results showed that the main challenges in reading literacy included limited variety of reading materials, suboptimal reading time, differences in students' reading interest, and inconsistent implementation of literacy programs. The strategies implemented by schools included the School Literacy Movement, daily reading habituation, shared reading, group discussions, reading corners, digital media, and collaboration with parents. The findings indicate that structured and contextual literacy strategies can improve students' engagement, reading comprehension, reading habits, and learning outcomes, particularly in subjects requiring text comprehension. The study concludes that literacy improvement requires principal support, teacher creativity, diverse reading materials, and periodic program evaluation.
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Keywords: reading literacy; school strategy; elementary school; School Literacy Movement; reading instruction.	Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis tantangan dan strategi sekolah dalam meningkatkan literasi membaca siswa sekolah dasar di Kecamatan Pangkalan Kerinci. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Partisipan penelitian meliputi kepala sekolah, wakil kepala sekolah, dan guru yang terlibat langsung dalam program literasi. Data dianalisis melalui analisis tematik dengan tahapan pengkodean, pengelompokan tema, dan penyusunan temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tantangan utama literasi membaca meliputi keterbatasan variasi bahan bacaan, waktu membaca yang belum optimal, perbedaan minat baca siswa, serta konsistensi pelaksanaan program literasi. Strategi yang diterapkan sekolah mencakup Gerakan Literasi Sekolah, pembiasaan membaca harian, membaca bersama, diskusi kelompok, pemanfaatan pojok baca, penggunaan media digital, serta kerja sama dengan orang tua. Pembahasan menunjukkan bahwa strategi literasi yang terstruktur dan kontekstual dapat meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, pemahaman bacaan, kebiasaan membaca, dan hasil belajar, terutama pada mata pelajaran yang menuntut pemahaman teks. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa peningkatan literasi membutuhkan dukungan kepala sekolah, kreativitas guru, ketersediaan bahan bacaan yang beragam, dan evaluasi program secara berkala. Implikasinya, sekolah perlu menyusun strategi literasi berbasis data dan kebutuhan siswa.
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1. Introduction

Reading literacy has become a primary focus of Indonesian basic education policy in 2025, as regulated in Ministerial Regulation No. 13 of 2025, which positions literacy as an essential competency for developing language skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. Literacy is not merely the technical ability to read texts, but also the ability to understand, evaluate, and interpret information across various learning contexts. Therefore, literacy learning is systematically integrated into subjects in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which provides flexibility in teaching according to students' needs [1].

This approach is in line with the concept of deep learning, which encourages students to read meaningfully, connect texts with real-life experiences, and think reflectively and critically. Reading literacy includes understanding, using, evaluating, and reflecting on texts across subjects [2]. Literacy assessment in elementary schools shows that reading ability involves tiered cognitive processes, ranging from locating explicit information to critical evaluation; thus, literacy involves comprehension and reasoning, not merely decoding [3]. Structured reading interventions, such as text-comprehension-based strategies and reflective thinking exercises, have been proven to improve students' literacy, particularly their ability to evaluate and synthesize texts [4], [5], [21].

On the one hand, the structured literacy approach based on the Science of Reading emphasizes the importance of explicit, systematic, and sequential reading instruction through the strengthening of phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Previous studies have shown that the implementation of structured literacy has a positive impact on the development of students' reading skills, while also reviving debates about the most effective approach to reading instruction in basic education. These findings are supported by various Science of Reading studies which affirm that mastery of foundational reading skills is an important basis for the development of more complex literacy.

On the other hand, several researchers argue that literacy success is not determined solely by mastery of basic reading skills. Studies on personalized reading instruction show that student engagement, relevance of reading materials, and meaning-making influence improvements in reading comprehension and learning motivation. In addition, studies of text comprehension emphasize that understanding texts involves tiered cognitive processes that require evaluation and meaning-making at different levels of difficulty. Therefore, reading instruction needs to be designed to develop higher-order thinking skills, not only decoding ability.

These differing views indicate that the development of reading literacy cannot focus only on technical reading skills or solely on the development of higher-order thinking skills. Both need to be integrated in a balanced way so that students are not only able to read fluently, but are also able to understand, interpret, evaluate, and reflect on information obtained from various types of texts. Therefore, school strategies to improve literacy need to accommodate the principles of structured literacy as well as deep learning so that they can respond more comprehensively to students' literacy development needs.

Several international studies in 2025 show that reading literacy scores in many education systems tend to stagnate or decline when measured using instruments that require comprehension of complex texts and higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, strengthening reading literacy has become an

important part of learning recovery in elementary schools [3]. In the context of basic education, other studies have found that although literacy programs have been implemented, students' literacy achievement does not always meet expectations because of obstacles such as limited facilities and reading materials, inconsistent program implementation, and the suboptimal role of teachers in creating a reading culture at school [6]. Low reading motivation is also frequently a major inhibiting factor in the development of early literacy, and structured reading interventions as well as consistent reading habituation have been shown to contribute meaningfully to improvements in students' reading literacy competence [7], [4].

This condition is consistent with the empirical phenomenon found in elementary schools in Pangkalan Kerinci District, where the overall literacy average was 61.4, with prominent weaknesses in the competency of accessing or locating explicit information (54.21) and reading literary texts (56.98), while interpretation ability was relatively higher at 66.04. This pattern indicates specific problems in the basic ability to locate information and in mastery of literary texts, rather than simply a general condition of "low literacy" [1].

In 2025, the literacy assessment results showed that 83.33% of students had reached the minimum competency in understanding, using, reflecting on, and evaluating various types of texts, both informational and fictional. The proportion of students with literacy ability above the minimum competency reached 16.67%, while 66.67% reached the expected minimum competency. However, 13.33% of students had literacy ability below the minimum competency, and approximately 3.33% had literacy ability far below the minimum competency [1]. These data indicate that although most students have achieved the required basic literacy competence, significant challenges remain in improving the literacy ability of a small proportion of students, particularly in evaluating and reflecting on more complex texts, both informational and fictional.

Ideally, elementary school students should develop from decoding ability toward fluent reading and comprehension of reading content, including locating explicit information, identifying important ideas, drawing simple conclusions, and evaluating reading content according to developmental phases and curriculum targets. Research evidence shows that structured literacy approaches based on phonics are effective in improving basic reading skills and reading comprehension, especially in the early grades [8]. The use of learning media such as Big Books has also been reported to improve early reading ability and alphabet mastery [9]. In addition, digital-based reciprocal teaching strategies have been proven to improve reading comprehension and students' critical thinking skills [10], and collaborative learning such as Literacy Relay can increase students' motivation and active participation in literacy activities [11]. Thus, if literacy strategies are implemented systematically, integratedly, and based on students' needs, literacy achievement should reach a more optimal level [8], [3].

Based on these problems, this study focuses on analyzing the challenges and school strategies in improving students' reading literacy by using the literacy achievement profile as an initial point for diagnosing problems. The strategies referred to include strengthening structured reading instruction, reading habituation through the School Literacy Movement, the use of learning media, technology integration, and strengthening the roles of teachers and parents [6], [8]. Technology integration through digital literacy approaches and reading applications has also been reported to have the potential to improve students' reading

literacy when applied in a directed manner and guided by teachers [26].

The implementation of appropriate literacy strategies provides real benefits for students' cognitive, academic, and social development. Structured literacy improves reading fluency and text comprehension [8], Big Book media helps strengthen early reading ability [9], digital-based reciprocal teaching strategies improve reading comprehension as well as critical thinking skills [10], and consistent literacy programs can increase students' reading interest and reading habits [12]. Thus, effective literacy strategies not only improve literacy scores but also shape sustainable learning habits and students' academic readiness for the next level [13].

Compared with previous studies, most research has focused on testing the effectiveness of particular approaches, media, technologies, or programs in improving the literacy skills of elementary school students. The similarity is that these studies are all oriented toward improving reading literacy through various forms of instructional intervention. However, most studies still evaluate literacy outcomes in general without mapping students' achievement in detail based on text type and the level of cognitive processes involved in reading activities. In fact, reading literacy is a multidimensional construct that includes the processes of locating explicit information (L1), interpreting information (L2), and evaluating and reflecting on text content (L3). Each level of cognitive process reflects different characteristics of ability and therefore requires different intervention strategies.

Mapping literacy achievement patterns based on indicators and levels of cognitive processes is crucial because it enables schools to identify more accurately the sources of students' literacy weaknesses. For example, low achievement at the level of locating explicit information (L1) indicates the need to strengthen basic reading skills and literal comprehension, whereas weaknesses at the level of evaluation and reflection (L3) require strategies that place greater emphasis on the development of critical thinking and deep comprehension of texts. Without detailed mapping, schools risk implementing general literacy strategies that are not sufficiently aligned with students' actual needs. As a result, literacy programs may improve overall achievement but may not necessarily address the specific weaknesses that constitute the root causes of students' literacy problems.

From an academic perspective, the limited number of studies that link literacy achievement profiles based on indicators with intervention strategies implemented in schools has resulted in limited understanding of the relationship between types of literacy weaknesses and the most effective strategies to address them. This condition has implications for the limited availability of an empirical basis for schools to design literacy programs that are targeted, data-based, and aligned with students' needs. Therefore, the research gap addressed in this study is the lack of empirical studies that map literacy achievement patterns in detail based on text type and cognitive process level and then connect them with the challenges faced by schools and the most relevant strategies for addressing weaknesses in certain indicators. Unlike previous research, this study uses literacy achievement data as the starting point for diagnosing problems and then connects it with field findings to formulate specific, contextual, and targeted school strategies for improving students' reading literacy.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the challenges faced by schools in improving students' reading literacy and to identify

and formulate effective and contextual school strategies for improving students' literacy skills in elementary schools in Pangkalan Kerinci District.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at describing the phenomenon in depth. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows the researchers to explore deeply and understand the challenges and strategies faced by schools in improving the reading literacy of elementary school students in Pangkalan Kerinci District. Qualitative research is a highly effective method for understanding social phenomena in their natural and contextual settings, where data are collected through interviews, observations, and documentation [14]. The phenomenological perspective used in this approach enables the researchers to explore participants' subjective experiences within their social contexts, such as the perceptions of teachers, principals, and parents regarding reading literacy and how they respond to the education policies being implemented.

Data collection in this study was carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation as the main techniques in the qualitative approach. In-depth interviews allowed the researchers to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and views comprehensively so that the challenges and practices of reading literacy in schools could be understood in detail [15]. Observations were conducted directly in classrooms and the school environment to record behavior, interactions, and literacy activities in natural contexts, enabling the researchers to study real phenomena without relying solely on reports from other parties. In addition, documentation such as school literacy reports, student literacy assessment data, and records of learning activities was collected to provide historical and contextual descriptions that could enrich the interview and observation findings while also confirming findings from other sources. By integrating these three techniques, the study was expected to provide a holistic understanding of the conditions, obstacles, and strategies for developing reading literacy in basic education units.

This research was conducted in elementary schools located in Pangkalan Kerinci District, Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province. The research location was selected purposively by considering that Pangkalan Kerinci District had literacy achievement data showing variations in students' abilities across various reading literacy indicators. Literacy assessment results indicated weaknesses in the ability to locate explicit information and understand literary texts; therefore, this area was considered relevant for examining the challenges and school strategies in improving students' reading literacy. In addition, the schools selected as research sites had implemented various literacy programs, such as the School Literacy Movement and reading habituation, thus providing an adequate context for exploring literacy development practices implemented in schools.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, namely the selection of informants based on certain considerations relevant to the objectives of the study. The informants consisted of principals and teachers who were directly involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating literacy programs at school. The criteria for principals included: (1) having served for at least two years at the school that became the research site so that they understood the condition and development of the school literacy program; (2) being involved

in decision-making related to literacy strengthening; and (3) being willing to provide in-depth information about the implementation of literacy programs at school.

The criteria for teachers included: (1) having at least five years of teaching experience so that they had sufficient experience in implementing literacy instruction; (2) being classroom teachers or teachers directly involved in school literacy activities; (3) having participated in training, workshops, or professional development activities related to literacy, the Merdeka Curriculum, or reading instruction; and (4) being willing to serve as research informants. The selection of informants based on these criteria was intended to ensure that the data obtained came from individuals with adequate experience, knowledge, and involvement in the development of reading literacy in elementary schools.

To improve the validity of the study, the researchers conducted data triangulation involving a combination of data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Sugiyono [11] explains that triangulation can improve the validity of research findings by confirming findings from various sources. In addition, member checking was conducted by providing feedback to participants to ensure that the data collected were consistent with their understanding.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, an approach in qualitative research that aims to identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning that emerge from interview, observation, and documentation data [11]. Thematic analysis was selected because it enables the researchers to understand in depth the various challenges and school strategies in improving reading literacy based on the experiences and perspectives of the informants.

The data analysis process was assisted by NVivo software to facilitate systematic data management, coding, and organization. The first stage was transcription and data familiarization, namely transcribing the interview results, collecting observation notes and supporting documents, and then reading all data repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research context. Next, all data were imported into NVivo to facilitate the process of coding and tracing relationships among data. The second stage was open coding, namely assigning codes to data units relevant to the research focus. At this stage, the researchers identified important words, sentences, or statements from informants related to the challenges and strategies of reading literacy. The third stage was axial coding, namely grouping codes with related meanings into broader categories. Learning-related codes, for example, were grouped into the category of limited facilities and learning resources. The fourth stage was theme development, namely arranging the categories that had been formed into the main themes of the study. Through NVivo's visualization and relationship analysis features, related categories were further analyzed to produce the main themes. These themes were then verified through source and technique triangulation by comparing interview, observation, and documentation results to ensure the credibility of the findings.

The final stage was the preparation of the findings narrative, namely integrating the themes obtained into a systematic descriptive account to explain the challenges and school strategies in improving students' reading literacy. With the assistance of NVivo, the analysis process became more structured, transparent, and traceable, thereby increasing the reliability of the interpretation of data obtained from the field.

3. Results and Discussion

To provide an initial overview of students' reading literacy conditions, this study first analyzed literacy achievement data based on school assessment results. These data were used as a basis for identifying literacy areas that still required strengthening and as a foundation for investigating the challenges and strategies implemented by schools. A comparison of literacy achievement scores based on assessment indicators can be seen in the following figure:

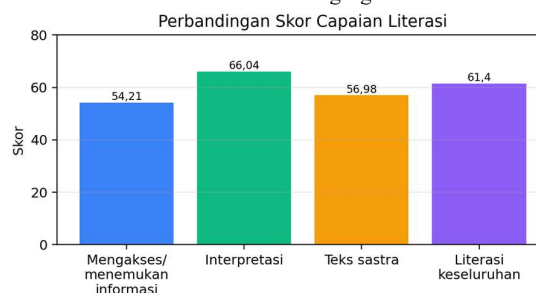


Figure 1. Comparison of literacy achievement scores.

Based on the figure above, students' literacy achievement varied across indicators. Interpretation ability obtained the highest score of 66.04, while the ability to access and locate explicit information obtained the lowest score of 54.21. Meanwhile, the ability to read literary texts scored 56.98, and overall literacy achievement reached 61.4.

These findings show that the literacy problems faced by students are not general in nature, but are more concentrated in basic reading skills for locating explicit information and understanding literary texts. This condition indicates the need for more specific interventions in certain aspects of literacy rather than merely improving reading ability in general. Therefore, these literacy achievement data were used as a basis for further exploring the various challenges faced by schools in developing students' reading literacy.

3.1. Challenges in Reading Literacy

Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that the challenges in developing reading literacy at schools were not only related to the availability of facilities, but also included students' reading interest and reading habits as well as the consistency of literacy program implementation. These three aspects are interrelated and influence the effectiveness of school efforts to build a literacy culture.

a) Limited Variety of Reading Materials

The interview results showed that schools already had relatively adequate literacy support facilities, such as libraries and reading corners in each classroom. However, the informants generally considered that the main challenge did not lie in the availability of facilities, but in the diversity and recency of reading collections available to students. As stated by the principal, "Our school's literacy facilities are quite good, with a library containing various types of books and reading corners in several classrooms. However, we still need to add book collections from various genres to attract more students' interest." (KS-1)

These findings indicate that the existence of physical facilities has not fully met students' literacy needs. Reading collections that are not sufficiently diverse may reduce students' interest in reading because not all students can find reading materials that match their interests and characteristics.

Observations also showed that some collections in reading corners were still dominated by the same books and had not been regularly updated. This condition indicates that literacy strengthening requires not only the availability of facilities but also the provision of reading materials that are varied, attractive, and appropriate to students' developmental needs.

b) Variation in Students' Reading Interest and Reading Discipline

The next challenge relates to students' varied reading interest. The interview results showed that some students had demonstrated high enthusiasm for reading activities, especially students who were accustomed to using the library and reading corners. However, other students still needed motivation and guidance to be actively involved in literacy activities. One informant stated: "Students' reading interest is actually quite high, especially among those who are used to reading. However, some students are still less interested because the choice of books is limited." (WKS-3)

This finding shows that students' reading interest is influenced not only by individual factors but also by the learning environment and the availability of reading materials that meet their needs. When students do not find interesting reading materials, reading activities tend to be viewed as a school obligation rather than as a need or enjoyable activity.

In addition to reading interest, students' discipline in developing reading habits also remains a challenge. Although schools have provided special time for reading activities every day through literacy programs, interview and observation results showed that not all students participated in these activities consistently. As stated by one teacher:

"Students' reading habits have begun to form, especially with the existence of the literacy program. Every day students are given time to read, but there are still some students who are less disciplined in carrying it out." (G-4)

Observations showed that during literacy activities, there were still students who lacked focus, did not bring reading materials, or required repeated guidance from teachers to participate in reading activities. This condition indicates that a reading culture has begun to grow in schools, but it has not yet been fully internalized as an independent habit among all students.

c) Consistency in Literacy Program Implementation

Another challenge found in this study was the consistency of school literacy program implementation, particularly the School Literacy Movement (GLS). The interview results showed that literacy programs had been implemented routinely and had become part of school activities. However, their implementation did not always run according to schedule because it was often influenced by other school activities considered more urgent. The principal explained:

"The literacy program is running quite well, although it is sometimes hindered by other more urgent activities. We are trying to maintain the consistency of literacy program implementation at school." (KS-6)

This finding was supported by documentation showing that several literacy activities were not implemented optimally when the school was conducting examinations, meetings, competitions, or other incidental activities. Observations also showed that the intensity of literacy program implementation could differ at certain times, depending on the school agenda being carried out.

In addition, the informants emphasized that literacy programs still required more systematic monitoring and

evaluation so that their implementation would remain consistent. A well-planned program does not necessarily produce optimal results if it is not accompanied by continuous supervision and follow-up. Therefore, the success of a literacy program is determined not only by the existence of the program itself, but also by the commitment of all school members to maintaining its implementation.

Overall, the research findings show that the main challenges in developing reading literacy at school include limited variety of reading materials, varied student reading interest and discipline, and the suboptimal consistency of literacy program implementation. These three challenges indicate that strengthening reading literacy requires an approach that focuses not only on the provision of facilities, but also on the development of a reading culture and the strengthening of literacy program management on an ongoing basis.

3.2. School Strategies for Improving Literacy

The research findings show that schools implemented various strategies to improve students' reading literacy. These strategies focused not only on reading activities in the classroom, but also involved the use of media and technology, implementation of school literacy programs, principal leadership support, and collaboration with parents. These findings indicate that improving reading literacy is viewed as a shared responsibility involving all school members and families.

a) Structured and Varied Reading Instruction

One of the main strategies implemented by schools was structured reading instruction integrated into daily learning activities. The interview results showed that teachers routinely provided special time for reading and integrated literacy activities into various subjects. In addition, teachers used varied teaching methods, such as shared reading, group discussions, and question-and-answer activities to help students understand reading content more deeply.

As stated by one informant, "Teachers use various strategies, including group discussions, shared reading, and the use of digital media that facilitates access to reading materials. We also support the application of interactive methods so that students are more engaged." (KS-9)

These findings indicate that literacy learning is no longer centered on individual reading activities, but is directed toward students' active involvement in understanding, discussing, and interpreting reading content. Observations also showed that students were more enthusiastic when reading activities were combined with discussion and group interaction than when they were only asked to read independently.

In addition, reading instruction was implemented in a structured manner through the provision of daily reading time and the integration of literacy activities into various subjects. In this way, reading is not positioned as an additional activity, but becomes part of an ongoing learning process.

b) Use of Media and Technology in Literacy

The next strategy was the use of media and technology as supporting tools for reading literacy activities. The research findings showed that schools did not rely only on printed books, but had also begun to use various digital learning resources such as e-books, learning applications, and educational videos.

One informant explained, "We use physical books, magazines, newspapers, as well as learning applications and digital books that students can access at any time." (KS-11)

These findings show that schools attempted to adapt literacy activities to technological developments and the characteristics of the digital generation. The presence of digital media provides

alternatives for students who have greater interest in technology than in conventional reading materials. Observations also showed that the use of digital media could increase students' attention and engagement during literacy activities.

Nevertheless, the informants emphasized that the effectiveness of technology use still needed to be evaluated periodically. This is important to ensure that the media used truly support literacy goals and are aligned with students' needs and preferences.

c) Strengthening the School Literacy Program

Schools also developed various special programs to strengthen the reading literacy culture. The main program implemented was the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which was carried out routinely every day. In addition, schools organized various supporting activities such as reading competitions, literacy seminars, and other reading-based activities.

One informant stated:

"Our school has a GLS program that is implemented every day. We also hold activities such as reading competitions and literacy seminars to broaden students' knowledge." (KS-14)

This finding indicates that schools attempted to create an environment that supports a reading culture through various engaging and sustainable activities. Documentation results showed that there were structured literacy activity schedules and the implementation of various literacy activities involving students actively. These programs aimed not only to improve reading ability but also to build students' interest and reading habits in daily life.

d) Principal Leadership Support

The success of literacy programs at school was also supported by the active role of the principal. The interview results showed that the principal played a role in providing facilities, allocating time for literacy activities, motivating teachers and students, and ensuring that literacy programs remained a school priority.

As stated by the principal:

"As principal, I ensure that all needs related to the literacy program are available, from facilities to support for teachers. I also provide direction to continue supporting and motivating students and teachers." (KS-15)

This finding shows that principal leadership is an important factor in the sustainability of literacy programs. The support provided was not only in the form of facilities and infrastructure, but also in the form of policy, supervision, and strengthening the commitment of all school members to literacy activities.

e) Collaboration with Parents

In addition to involving school members, strategies for improving literacy were also carried out through collaboration with parents. The research findings showed that schools routinely communicated with parents about students' literacy development and provided recommendations for reading activities that could be carried out at home.

One informant explained, "We routinely hold meetings with parents to discuss students' literacy development. We also provide book recommendations that can be read at home to support learning at school." (KS-16)

This finding shows that schools recognize the importance of family support in building students' reading habits. Literacy activities do not only take place in the school environment, but are also strengthened through reading activities at home. With parental involvement, the process of reading habituation becomes more sustainable and consistent.

Overall, the research findings show that school strategies for improving reading literacy were carried out through structured and varied reading instruction, the use of media and technology, strengthening of school literacy programs, principal leadership support, and collaboration with parents. These various strategies complement one another in creating a learning environment that supports the sustainable development of students' reading literacy.

3.3. Impact of Reading Literacy

The research findings show that the reading literacy program implemented by schools had a positive impact on the development of students' academic abilities and learning habits. This impact was reflected in improved reading comprehension, increased student engagement in literacy activities, the formation of reading habits, and improved learning outcomes in subjects that require text comprehension.

a) Improvement in Reading Comprehension Ability

One of the most prominent impacts was the improvement in students' ability to understand reading content. The interview results showed that after literacy programs were implemented routinely, students became more able to understand information contained in texts and could more easily explain the content of the texts they had read.

As stated by one informant:

"Students' ability to understand reading has improved after the literacy program was implemented. Even so, some students still need additional assistance so that they can understand reading materials more deeply." (KS-17)

This finding shows that the literacy program contributed to the improvement of students' reading comprehension ability. However, this improvement had not occurred evenly among all students. Observations showed that some students still experienced difficulties when reading more complex texts or when asked to interpret reading content in depth. Therefore, guidance and reinforcement of reading strategies are still needed for students whose literacy skills have not yet developed optimally.

b) Increased Student Engagement in Literacy Activities

The literacy program also had an impact on increasing students' involvement in various reading activities. The interview results showed that students became more active in discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and reading-based activities carried out after reading.

One informant stated, "Student engagement is already good, especially after group discussions are held after reading. However, some students are still relatively passive and need more encouragement." (KS-18)

This finding indicates that follow-up activities after reading play an important role in increasing student participation. Observations showed that students were more willing to express opinions, ask questions, and share information when reading activities were followed by group discussions or simple presentations. These activities not only helped students understand reading content, but also developed communication and critical thinking skills.

Nevertheless, some students were still passive and needed additional motivation to participate actively. This shows that student engagement in literacy activities still needs to be strengthened through learning strategies that are more participatory and aligned with students' characteristics.

c) Formation of Reading Habits

Another impact found was the beginning of the formation of reading habits among students. The interview results showed

that students did not only read when participating in literacy activities at school, but also began to show reading habits outside learning hours.

As stated by one informant:

“Students’ reading habits are improving. They now read more often both at school and outside school. They are also more active in discussing what they read.” (KS-19)

This finding shows that literacy programs have contributed to building a more positive reading culture. Observations also showed that students began to use their free time to read in the library and in classroom reading corners. In addition, some students appeared more enthusiastic in sharing stories about the books they had read with their friends.

This change shows that literacy activities carried out routinely can shift students’ perceptions of reading, from an activity that is obligatory to an activity that is beginning to be accepted as part of daily learning habits.

d) Impact on Learning Outcomes

The reading literacy program also had a positive influence on students’ learning outcomes. The interview results showed that improved reading and text-comprehension abilities helped students participate in learning more effectively, especially in subjects that require the ability to understand written information.

One informant stated:

“The literacy program has a positive impact on students’ learning outcomes, especially in subjects that require reading comprehension, such as Indonesian Language and Social Studies.” (KS-20)

This finding shows that reading literacy ability is closely related to students’ academic success. Observations showed that students who actively participated in literacy activities tended to understand learning instructions more easily, answer text-based questions, and complete assignments requiring reading ability. Thus, improvements in reading literacy affect not only reading ability itself but also support learning achievement in various subjects.

Overall, the research findings show that reading literacy programs had a positive impact on students’ development. These impacts were reflected in improved reading comprehension, increased student engagement in literacy activities, the formation of reading habits, and improved learning outcomes in subjects requiring text comprehension. Although some students still need further guidance, these findings show that literacy programs implemented consistently can contribute to building a reading culture and supporting students’ learning success in elementary schools.

4. Discussion

4.1. Challenges in Reading Literacy

The research findings show that the main challenges in developing reading literacy at school include limited variety of reading materials, uneven student reading interest, and consistency in literacy program implementation. These three challenges are interrelated and show that literacy improvement depends not only on the existence of programs, but also on the quality of implementation and the literacy culture that develops in schools.

Limited variety of reading materials is one of the challenges

still faced by schools. Although libraries and reading corners are available, the existing reading collections have not fully accommodated students’ diverse needs and interests. This finding is in line with Hussein and Tan [5], who state that the diversity of reading materials influences students’ reading interest. However, this study shows that the problem occurring in Pangkalan Kerinci is not only related to the number of books, but also to the relevance and attractiveness of reading materials to students’ characteristics. In other words, the availability of physical facilities does not automatically result in increased reading activity if the available reading materials are not able to build students’ attachment to reading activities.

In addition to reading materials, this study found that students’ reading interest still varied considerably. Some students were accustomed to reading and using available literacy facilities, whereas others still required intensive encouragement and guidance. This finding supports Rahman and Hidayati [22], who show that students’ reading motivation is influenced by both internal factors and the learning environment. However, in the context of this study, low reading interest cannot be explained only by individual motivation. Observations showed that students who had access to interesting reading materials and received reading support from teachers and families tended to show higher reading interest. This finding indicates that reading interest is the result of interactions among individual factors, the school environment, and the family environment.

The most interesting finding is that obstacles to the consistency of literacy program implementation were still found even though the School Literacy Movement (GLS) has become a national policy implemented in many schools. Theoretically, the existence of GLS should encourage the formation of a sustainable reading culture. However, the research findings show that literacy activities are still often disrupted by other school agendas such as examinations, competitions, meetings, and administrative activities. This condition indicates a gap between policy and implementation at the school level.

Compared with the study by Rahmawati and Sari [6], the main obstacle to literacy is often explained as limited student reading time. However, this study found that the issue of time does not stem solely from students, but also from institutional priorities within schools. Literacy programs are still often positioned as additional activities that can be postponed when other agendas are considered more important. This is an interesting anomaly because it shows that the existence of a national policy does not necessarily guarantee consistent implementation at the school level. Thus, the main challenge faced by schools is no longer the provision of programs, but the effort to make literacy part of the school culture integrated into daily learning activities.

Analysis of literacy achievement data strengthens these findings. The lowest scores were found in the ability to locate explicit information and read literary texts. This condition shows that students still experience difficulties in aspects that should serve as the foundation of reading literacy. This finding differs from the common assumption that literacy challenges among elementary school students lie more in higher-order thinking skills. Conversely, the research findings show that the weakness is in basic reading ability, which is greatly influenced by reading practice frequency, exposure to diverse reading materials, and consistency of literacy programs. Therefore, literacy problems in Pangkalan Kerinci are not only related to students’ abilities, but also to how schools build a sustainable reading environment and reading culture.

Overall, the research findings show that reading literacy challenges in Pangkalan Kerinci result from the interaction of facilities, reading interest, and literacy program implementation. These findings provide an understanding that literacy success is not sufficiently determined by the existence of national policies or programs, but depends greatly on schools' ability to translate these policies into consistent, contextual practices that meet students' needs.

4.2. School Strategies in Reading Literacy

The research findings show that schools implemented various strategies to improve students' reading literacy through structured reading instruction, the use of collaborative methods, the utilization of digital technology, and the strengthening of the School Literacy Movement (GLS). These strategies do not stand alone, but complement one another in addressing literacy weaknesses identified from student achievement data.

One strategy implemented was structured reading instruction through the provision of daily reading time and the integration of reading activities into various subjects. This strategy is important because literacy achievement data show that the ability to locate explicit information is the indicator with the lowest score. From the perspective of structured literacy, the ability to locate explicit information is a foundation that students must master before developing more complex interpretation and evaluation abilities. Therefore, reading habituation carried out routinely can be understood as an effort to strengthen basic reading ability, which remains students' main weakness.

In addition to structured instruction, teachers applied shared reading and group discussion methods to increase students' engagement in understanding reading materials. This finding supports Kool and Ismail [7], who show that collaborative learning can improve students' comprehension and reading interest. However, this study found that the effectiveness of this method is determined not only by the discussion activity itself, but also by the existence of a reading culture built previously through daily literacy activities. In other words, group discussions become more effective when students already have sufficient reading experience as a basis for exchanging ideas and interpreting reading content.

The use of digital technology is also an important strategy in improving reading literacy. Schools provide access to e-books, learning applications, and various digital reading resources that students can use both at school and at home. This finding is in line with Han and Lee [16], who state that digital media can increase students' reading interest because it is more consistent with the characteristics of the digital generation. However, this study shows that technology does not automatically improve reading literacy. The effectiveness of technology greatly depends on how teachers integrate it into learning activities. When digital media are used only as additional reading sources, their impact tends to be limited. Conversely, when these media are used to support discussion, reflection, and reading comprehension activities, student engagement becomes higher.

An interesting finding is that the strategies implemented by schools indirectly led to a data-driven literacy intervention approach. Unlike most literacy programs that are implemented uniformly, the strategies in these schools developed in response to students' literacy achievement profiles, which showed weaknesses in locating explicit information and reading literary texts. The addition of varied reading materials, strengthening of reading habituation, and use of digital media are forms of intervention relevant to the identified weaknesses. Thus, literacy strategies are not based solely on general assumptions about

students' needs, but also on actual literacy achievement data.

This finding has broader implications for the development of literacy programs in elementary schools. Many schools have implemented similar literacy programs without considering which literacy indicators need the greatest strengthening. The findings of this study show that mapping literacy achievement based on indicators can serve as a basis for determining intervention priorities. Schools with weaknesses in the ability to locate explicit information certainly need strategies different from those of schools with weaknesses in evaluation or reflection abilities. Therefore, an indicator-based literacy approach can be viewed as a model for developing literacy programs that are more specific, contextual, and targeted.

When linked to the concept of deep learning, the strategies implemented by schools show fairly positive development. Shared reading, group discussions, presentations of reading results, and the use of digital media have encouraged students' active engagement in the learning process. These characteristics are consistent with the principles of deep learning, which emphasize meaningful learning through interaction, reflection, and knowledge construction. However, the research findings also show that most strategies still focus on reading habituation and increasing reading frequency. Activities that explicitly encourage students to connect reading content with real-life experiences, solve problems based on information read, or produce work as a form of reflection on reading are still relatively limited. Thus, the literacy strategies implemented can be said to be moving toward the principles of deep learning, but still require strengthening so that students are not only able to read and understand texts, but also able to use the knowledge obtained to think critically and solve problems in real life.

4.3. Impact of Reading Literacy

The research findings show that literacy programs implemented by schools had a positive impact on reading comprehension, student engagement in learning activities, and the formation of reading habits. However, these impacts should not be understood merely as improvements in reading ability in general, but as indications that the strategies implemented by schools have begun to address literacy weaknesses identified through student achievement data.

Improvement in reading comprehension was one of the most visible impacts. Students showed better ability to locate information, explain reading content, and understand messages contained in texts. This finding supports Rahman and Hidayati [17], who state that literacy programs carried out consistently can improve students' reading comprehension. However, this study shows that this improvement was not yet fully even. Some students still required additional assistance to understand more complex reading materials. This condition indicates that literacy improvement does not occur automatically through the provision of reading programs, but is influenced by the school's ability to adjust instructional strategies to each student's needs.

In addition to improved reading comprehension, students' engagement in learning activities also developed positively. Students became more active in group discussions, question-and-answer activities, and various activities related to reading. This finding is in line with Kool and Ismail [7], who show that group discussions can increase student participation while strengthening understanding of the material studied. However, this study shows that increased student engagement was not only caused by the use of discussion methods, but also by the formation of a learning environment that supports students in expressing opinions and sharing their understanding of reading

materials. In other words, the success of literacy depends not only on teaching methods, but also on the learning culture that develops in schools.

Another important finding is the beginning of the formation of reading habits among students. Literacy programs that provide routine reading time have encouraged students to read more often, both at school and at home. This result supports the findings of Taufik and Damanik [18], who state that consistent reading habituation can strengthen students' literacy culture. However, this study found that the success of forming reading habits is strongly influenced by continuity between the school environment and the family environment. Students who receive reading support from parents tend to show better development of reading habits than students who receive literacy stimulation only at school. This finding shows that literacy strengthening requires continuous collaboration between schools and families.

Further analysis shows that the impacts that emerged indicate that the literacy strategies implemented by schools influenced not only reading ability, but also the development of broader learning skills. Students who read more actively tended to understand instructions more easily, process information, and express opinions in learning activities. This shows that reading literacy functions as a foundation for the development of other academic competencies. Thus, the impact of literacy programs cannot be measured only through increases in reading scores, but also through changes in learning behavior and student engagement in the learning process.

The findings of this study also provide an interesting perspective when linked to the concept of deep learning. Theoretically, deep learning emphasizes not only the ability to obtain information, but also the ability to understand, connect, reflect on, and use knowledge in different contexts. The research findings show that several strategies implemented by schools, such as group discussions, shared reading, and the use of digital media, have encouraged students to interact more actively with reading materials. This condition indicates a shift from mechanical reading activities toward more meaningful reading activities.

Nevertheless, the research findings also show that the most dominant impacts remain in the improvement of reading comprehension and reading habituation. Impacts related to critical reflection, knowledge transfer, and problem solving based on information read have not yet appeared strongly. This finding is important because it shows that the implementation of literacy in schools is still at the stage of strengthening literacy foundations and has not fully achieved the characteristics of deep learning, which emphasizes in-depth learning. In other words, the literacy program implemented has succeeded in building reading habits and improving students' comprehension, but it still requires further development so that it can produce critical, reflective, and transformative thinking abilities.

Overall, the impacts found in this study strengthen the argument that literacy strategies designed based on the weakest achievement indicators have greater potential to produce real change. This finding also reinforces the contribution of this study, namely showing that literacy achievement mapping based on indicators is not only useful for identifying problems, but can also serve as a basis for designing more targeted interventions with more measurable impacts. Therefore, an approach based on literacy achievement data can be considered as a model for developing literacy programs that can be replicated by other schools by adjusting to the characteristics and needs of their

students.

5. Conclusion

The literacy program implemented in these schools has had a significant impact on improving students' reading ability. The challenges faced, such as limited variety of reading materials and insufficient time for reading, can be addressed through effective strategies such as group discussions, shared reading, and the use of digital media. The diversity of reading materials, especially through the use of digital media, has succeeded in increasing students' reading interest, which in turn improves their understanding of more complex reading materials. In addition, the literacy program has also increased students' engagement in reading activities and improved their reading habits, both at school and at home. Active involvement in discussions and question-and-answer activities strengthens students' comprehension and critical thinking skills. Overall, the implementation of literacy programs has proven to have a positive impact on students' literacy skills, to form more consistent reading habits, and to improve their learning outcomes.

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