The Role of Schools in Building a Literacy Culture through Support for Reading Motivation and Interest

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DOI : 10.21107/prosodi.v19i2.31672

ABSTRACT

Literacy culture is not only demonstrated through reading activities at school or in certain formal programs but also through reading habits within families and communities, which occur naturally without being perceived as school assignments. Therefore, schools need to provide support for students' motivation and interest in reading so that literacy culture can develop sustainably. This study aims to examine: (1) access to information resources, (2) reading habits, (3) the quality of reading materials, and (4) students' motivation and interest in reading. The research design employed a descriptive approach by combining quantitative data from questionnaires with narrative analysis. The subjects of this study were 239 students of MTs Miftahul Huda, Jambu Village, Plemahan District, Kediri Regency, selected through a total sampling technique. The research instrument was a questionnaire distributed via Google Form, while data analysis was carried out through reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that access to information resources is relatively adequate in terms of libraries and reading materials, although digital literacy still needs strengthening. Reading habits are categorized as moderately active to active, the quality of reading materials is rated as good, and students' motivation and interest in reading are considered high. This study concludes that strengthening digital literacy, providing contextual reading materials, and implementing collective appreciation strategies are necessary to develop a more balanced and sustainable literacy culture.

Keywords: literacy culture; teacher involvement; reading habits; reading quality; learning motivation

BACKGROUND

Schools, as formal educational institutions, hold the primary responsibility of equipping students with competencies in knowledge, skills, and attitudes aligned with the standards of outstanding graduates. Reading activities serve as a fundamental skill that cuts across these three domains, providing the foundation for understanding academic content, fostering critical thinking, and shaping reflective character. Therefore, it is essential for schools to consistently cultivate students' motivation and interest in reading. Sari (2018) emphasizes that schools play a significant role in fostering reading motivation and interest by creating a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment for students. Moreover, the concept of schools as "gardens of learning" has long been introduced by Ki Hajar Dewantara and is further reinforced in national policies such as the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2015, which underscores the importance of building a friendly, safe, and inspiring learning atmosphere to encourage students to enjoy the learning process and actively engage in school activities.

When the school climate and environment fail to play their role in supporting reading habits, it can hinder the development of a literacy culture that should naturally flourish. In fact, reading habits provide dual benefits: not only do they facilitate students' understanding of academic material, but they also shape critical thinking skills toward various global and contemporary issues. Hasanah (2022) emphasize that there is a significant positive correlation between reading habits and students' critical thinking skills. In the context of the 21st century, learners need not only reflective and analytical thinking skills but must also be prepared to adapt to the dynamics of the times (Chourio, 2024). Thus, reading is not merely an academic task but an essential skill that connects students to global realities while fostering social awareness and cultural insight. Furthermore, literacy serves as a bridge to building national competitiveness through a generation that is critical, creative, and solution-oriented. In line with this, the (Conference Board, 2006) highlights that critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills are among the key competencies required in the modern world and workplace. Therefore, strategies to strengthen literacy culture in schools should be directed toward synergy between learning, the school environment, and the active participation of the entire school community.

Therefore, in 2016 the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) launched the *School Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Sekolah/GLS)*, which focused on fostering students' motivation and interest in reading. This initiative was part of the implementation of Ministerial Regulation No. 23 of 2015 on the Cultivation of Noble Character (*Penumbuhan Budi Pekerti*). The implementation of GLS was highly justified given that Indonesians' reading motivation and interest remained relatively low (Adit, 2023). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2016 reported that Indonesia's reading interest index was only 0.001%—meaning that out of 1,000 Indonesians, only one person could be categorized as an avid reader. Furthermore, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kemenkominfo), through its official website, released the results of a study titled *World's Most Literate Nations Ranked*, conducted by Central Connecticut State University, which ranked Indonesia 60th out of 61 countries in reading interest, just below Thailand (59th) and above Botswana (61st). Meanwhile, the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*, an

international study that evaluates the quality of education systems by measuring essential learning outcomes, showed a decline in Indonesia's performance, placing the country among the bottom eleven of 81 participating nations (Radio Republik Indonesia, 2024).

At first, literacy was defined merely as the ability to read and write. Literacy refers to a set of tangible skills, primarily reading and writing, regardless of the context in which these skills are acquired or who acquires them (UNESCO, 2017). In the 21st century, however, the concept of literacy is no longer limited to basic reading and writing skills. Reading and writing literacy is also associated with the ability to identify, locate, analyze, evaluate, and create new knowledge, as well as to use and communicate information to solve various problems (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia (Kemendikbud, 2017). With the rapid advancement of science and technology and the overwhelming flow of information and communication, reading habits have begun to shift from paper to screen. (Labardi, 2019) notes that young people generally hold positive attitudes toward the necessity of digital reading. Similarly, Susanti (2024) emphasizes that learners, as active users of technology, particularly smartphones and the internet, have a positive perception of the development and use of technology in learning environments.

Literacy culture is a continuous habit of understanding and processing information so that it fosters critical and creative thinking (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2016). Thus, literacy culture is not limited to practices carried out only at school or during certain formal activities, but is also developed through habits within the family and the community. Lustyantie (2020) states that literacy culture means that children and even family members are engaged in literacy experiences not only during school hours but also after school and in the community, in ways that do not feel like obligatory tasks. Literacy is therefore not something confined to a specific time of day or a particular subject area. This implies that literacy culture can shape patterns of thought and action that encourage individuals to develop a deep understanding of various concepts, information, and ideas. In this context, students read and write not merely to fulfill school assignments, but more importantly, for personal development and the application of their skills in everyday life.

This highlights the crucial role of schools in supporting students' motivation and interest in reading as part of efforts to build a literacy culture. According to Rahim (2018) reading interest is defined as a strong willingness accompanied by conscious effort to engage in reading. Individuals with strong reading interest can be observed through their willingness to allocate sufficient time and maintain focus in regularly engaging in reading activities. Aprilia (2020) emphasizes that motivation and reading interest serve as driving forces that influence behavior and actions, which are subsequently accompanied by feelings of enjoyment and a sustained interest in reading activities. The level of reading interest can be assessed through various aspects, such as awareness of the benefits of reading, attention to the books being read, feelings of enjoyment while reading, and the frequency of reading. McKool (2007) expanded the meaning and interpretation of motivation and reading interest by stating that reading interest is an indicator of reading activities outside the school environment carried out by students. This perspective is particularly significant as it highlights that genuine reading learning should not be confined to structured educational settings.

Based on the results of observations, MTs Miftahul Huda in Jambu Village, Plemahan Subdistrict, Kediri Regency, East Java, demonstrates significant potential for developing a literacy culture. Therefore, this study is designed to provide information that can enhance added value in strengthening literacy traditions within the school. Specifically, the objectives of this research are to examine: (1) the availability of access to information resources; (2) the activeness of students' reading habits; (3) the diversity and quality of reading materials; and (4) students' motivation and interest in reading.

This research is expected to provide benefits in two main domains. First, from a theoretical perspective, the findings can enrich scientific studies on literacy culture, particularly in relation to students' motivation and reading interest. Second, from a practical perspective, this research is beneficial for schools in fostering a literacy-based learning system; for teachers in enhancing active involvement through the assignment of reading and writing tasks; for students in developing sustainable reading and writing habits; and for library managers in providing a more diverse, relevant, and high-quality collection of reading materials. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the creation of a balanced, collaborative, and sustainable school literacy ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design employed a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing quantitative data as the basis for analytical narration. This approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive overview of the implementation of literacy culture in schools through the presentation of numerical data combined with narrative explanation. According to Sugiono (2018) the qualitative descriptive method aims to offer a systematic, factual, and accurate description of facts and the relationships among phenomena. This is in line with Creswell, (2014) view that qualitative research enables researchers to understand social phenomena by exploring participants' perspectives in depth.

This study employed three independent variables, namely: (1) access to information sources (X1), (2) reading habits (X2), and (3) reading quality (X3), as well as one dependent variable, namely reading motivation and interest (Y). The research subjects were all students of MTs Miftahul Huda, located in Jambu Village, Plemahan Subdistrict, Kediri Regency, consisting of seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade students with a total of 239 participants. The sampling technique used was total sampling, whereby the entire population was included as research respondents.

The instrument used was a questionnaire developed based on literacy culture indicators and distributed online via Google Form. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative analysis stages, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Hubberman, 2009). This analysis aimed to identify trends, strengths, and weaknesses in the implementation of literacy culture at school.

DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings related to the implementation of literacy culture at MTs Miftahul Huda, based on data collected from questionnaires administered to 239 respondents. The data are presented in tabular form to clarify the

distribution of responses and are then analyzed narratively to identify trends, strengths, and weaknesses in each aspect.

The indicators analyzed encompass five main dimensions: (1) availability of information sources, (2) teacher involvement, (3) reading habits, (4) quality of reading materials, and (5) reading motivation and interest. Each dimension consists of four items that were developed according to the research instrument framework. To maintain consistency, the numbering of items in the result tables follows the sequence from the first to the last dimension.

A. Availability of Information Sources

The availability of information sources serves as the initial indicator to measure the school's readiness in fostering a literacy culture. This indicator encompasses four aspects: (1) the availability of internet access at school, (2) the availability of a school library, (3) the availability of various types of reading materials at school, and (4) the availability of digital literacy media. These four aspects were selected because they represent a balance between physical and digital literacy facilities, which complement one another in supporting students' literacy activities.

As a starting point, the data in **Table 1** below present the distribution of respondents' assessments regarding the availability of information sources at MTs Miftahul Huda, revealing patterns and tendencies in their responses.

Table 1. Distribution of Access to Information Sources

No.	Indicator	Not Available (%)	Less Available (%)	Fairly Available (%)	Available (%)	Highly Available (%)	Total (%)
1	Availability of internet network at school	0	3	26	50	21	100
2	Availability of school library	0	6	14	30	50	100
3	Availability of various types of reading materials	2	3	23	34	38	100
4	Availability of digital literacy media at school	1	4	26	47	22	100

The results in Table 1 show that the availability of the school library is the most dominant indicator, with a total of 80% of respondents rating it as available to highly available. This indicates that conventional literacy infrastructure has been well established in the school. Regarding the availability of internet networks, 71% of respondents rated it as available to highly available, which suggests that access to digital literacy is relatively adequate, although the percentage of "fairly available" responses remains considerably high (26%).

The availability of various types of reading materials received positive assessments from 72% of respondents (available–highly available). However, 5% of respondents indicated that such materials were either unavailable or insufficiently available, suggesting the need to increase the variety of reading resources to make them more diverse and aligned with students' interests. Meanwhile, the availability of digital literacy media received a positive score of 69% (available–highly

available), while 26% rated it as fairly available. This condition underscores that although digital literacy support already exists, the optimization of infrastructure and digital content remains a strategic necessity. Overall, physical literacy facilities appear to be more prominent than digital literacy facilities, indicating that interventions aimed at strengthening digital literacy will be an important step in fostering a more balanced literacy culture in schools.

In addition to data on the availability of internet access at school, the second source of information access data was obtained from Figure 2, which illustrates the availability of school libraries. From the 239 respondents, it can be seen that 0% chose unavailable, 6% chose less available, 14% chose fairly available, 30% chose available, and 50% chose highly available.

The third data on access to information sources, namely the availability of various types of reading materials at school, can be seen in Figure 3. Out of 239 respondents, 2% selected unavailable, 3% less available, 23% fairly available, 34% available, and 38% highly available.

Thus, the analysis of the availability of information sources indicates that the school demonstrates strength in conventional literacy facilities, while digital literacy still requires reinforcement. After mapping the availability of these facilities, the next step is to examine the extent to which teachers actively utilize and integrate these information sources into the learning process.

B. Teacher Involvement

The role of teachers is a crucial factor in the success of school literacy programs. Teacher involvement is measured through four indicators: (5) the activeness in assigning reading tasks, (6) the activeness in providing practice to answer questions, (7) the activeness in assigning writing tasks, and (8) the activeness in assigning summarization tasks. These four indicators were selected because they represent literacy activities that cover both receptive skills (reading, answering questions) and productive skills (writing, summarizing), which are equally important for strengthening students' literacy culture.

Table 2. Teacher Involvement in Literacy Activities

No.	Indicator	Not Active (%)	Less Active (%)	Moderately Active (%)	Active (%)	Very Active (%)	Total (%)
5	Activeness in assigning reading tasks	1	2	18	39	40	100
6	Activeness in assigning practice questions based on reading	2	3	15	40	40	100
7	Activeness in assigning writing tasks of various text types	2	2	18	36	42	100
8	Activeness in assigning summarization of learning materials	1	3	24	44	28	100

The results in Table 2 indicate that teacher involvement in literacy activities is generally within the **active to very active** category. Assigning reading tasks received the highest score, with **79% of teachers rated as active to very active**. This underscores that reading activities remain the primary focus in literacy learning at

school. The activity of assigning practice questions based on reading also holds a strong position **(80% active–very active)**, suggesting that teachers strive to foster text comprehension skills through reading response exercises.

For the indicator of assigning writing tasks of various text types, **78% of teachers** fall into the active–very active category, with the "very active" percentage reaching the highest level **(42%)**. This finding reflects teachers' attention to developing students' productive skills through writing activities. Meanwhile, the indicator of assigning summarization tasks for learning materials shows a more varied distribution, with **72% in the active–very active category** and **24% in the moderately active category**. This condition suggests that summarization activities have not received as much emphasis as reading and writing activities.

Overall, teacher involvement in literacy activities at MTs Miftahul Huda can be categorized as strong, although there is variation in emphasis across different types of tasks. This pattern indicates that teachers are more intensive in encouraging reading and writing activities, while summarization skills still need to be strengthened to achieve balance as a strategy for text comprehension.

The findings regarding teacher involvement illustrate that the role of educators in integrating literacy into learning is already quite strong, particularly in the aspects of reading and writing. However, the intensity of teacher involvement inevitably has direct implications for how students develop their own literacy habits. In other words, teachers' activeness in assigning literacy tasks is expected to correspond with students' participation in reading activities. Therefore, the following section will present data on students' reading habits, which represent the dimension of student participation in the implementation of literacy culture at school.

C. Reading Habits

Students' reading habits constitute one of the essential dimensions in the implementation of a literacy culture at school. Students' active participation in reading is influenced not only by the availability of information sources and teachers' involvement but also by their personal motivation and interest in reading. To assess this aspect, the study mapped several indicators, namely the amount of time spent on reading, the number of books read within a specific period, the frequency of reading outside school hours, and interest in various types of reading materials.

Table 3. Reading Habits

No.	Indicator	Not Active (%)	Less Active (%)	Fairly Active (%)	Active (%)	Very Active (%)	Total (%)
9	Activeness in time spent reading books per day/week	2	14	49	25	10	100
10	Activeness in the number of books read within a certain period	3	11	52	26	8	100
11	Activeness in reading outside school hours	4	14	50	22	10	100
12	Interest in various types of reading (fiction, nonfiction, scientific, news)	1	5	40	34	20	100

The results in Table 3 show that most students fall into the "fairly active" category in their reading habits, particularly in the indicators of reading time and the number of books read, with achievements of 49% and 52%, respectively. This condition indicates that reading activities are indeed carried out, but the intensity has not yet reached an optimal level. In the indicator of reading outside school hours, 50% of students are also in the fairly active category, while 22% are active and only 10% are very active, suggesting that student engagement beyond formal academic activities remains relatively limited. Interestingly, in the aspect of interest in various types of reading, the distribution tends to be more positive: 54% of students are in the active–very active categories, and only 6% are less active. This indicates that reading interest is actually quite high, but it still needs to be directed so that it materializes into more intensive reading habits. Overall, students' reading habits are at a fairly developed level, with the main challenge lying in increasing the frequency and duration of reading, rather than in the availability of interest.

Based on the data, students' reading habits at MTs Miftahul Huda tend to fall within the fairly active to active categories. The majority of students are already accustomed to setting aside time for reading, both at school and outside of class hours, although the intensity still varies. Meanwhile, the number of books read within a given period also shows a generally positive trend, even though the proportion of students who are truly very active remains relatively small. These findings indicate that a reading culture has begun to take shape, but mentoring strategies are still needed to enhance the quality and consistency of reading activities, particularly to ensure that reading interest becomes more evenly distributed across all types of texts.

D. Quality of Reading Materials

After presenting the students' reading habits, the next aspect to be examined is the quality of the reading materials available at school. This dimension focuses on the relevance, diversity, and level of alignment of the readings with students' learning needs. The quality of reading materials is an important factor because, although the availability of books and the intensity of reading are relatively good, without the support of high-quality content, efforts to build a literacy culture will not be optimal. Therefore, the following subsection presents the findings related to the quality of the reading materials used by students at MTs Miftahul Huda.

Table 4. Quality of Reading Materials

No.	Indicator	Poor (%)	Fair (%)	Moderate (%)	Good (%)	Very Good (%)	Total (%)
13	Quality of books or reading materials at school	2	3	13	41	41	100
14	Diversity of topics or reading themes in the school library	1	3	15	35	46	100
15	Quality of reading content at school in relation to self-development needs	0	3	21	47	29	100
16	Quality of reading resources that support learning at school	1	1	17	42	39	100

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that the quality of reading materials at MTs Miftahul Huda received relatively positive assessments from respondents. The

first indicator, concerning the general quality of books or reading materials at school, obtained 82% of responses in the good and very good categories, while only 5% of respondents rated them as poor to fair. This suggests that, overall, the quality of the available reading materials is already aligned with the basic literacy needs of the students.

On the indicator of the diversity of reading topics or themes in the school library, as many as 81% of respondents gave ratings in the good to very good categories. The high appreciation for this diversity of themes shows that the school's reading collection is not limited to subject matter, but also includes a variety of other materials that can broaden students' horizons.

Furthermore, on the indicator of the relevance of reading materials to students' self-development needs, 76% of respondents rated them as good and very good. However, 21% of respondents still rated them as fairly good. This indicates the need for evaluation and more selective selection of reading materials to optimally support students' individual potential and interests.

Finally, the quality of reading resources that support learning received a positive score of 81% in the good to very good categories. This finding indicates that the books available at school function not only as general reading materials but also as resources relevant to students' academic needs.

Overall, the quality of reading materials at the school can be categorized as good, with significant support in terms of thematic diversity and the relevance of content to learning. However, further efforts are still needed to strengthen the suitability of reading materials with students' personal development so that the literacy cultivated is not only academic in nature but also personal and contextual.

After discussing the quality of reading materials, the next equally important aspect is students' motivation and interest in reading. While the quality of reading materials serves as an external factor that supports literacy activities, motivation and reading interest represent internal factors that determine the extent to which students actively engage in literacy practices. Motivation drives consistency in reading, whereas reading interest influences the choice of preferred reading genres. Therefore, the following section presents the findings related to students' motivation and reading interest at MTs Miftahul Huda as a reflection of the internal strength of the school's literacy culture.

E. Motivation and Reading Interest

Motivation and reading interest are key aspects that reflect students' internal readiness in building a literacy culture. When facilities, teacher involvement, and the quality of reading materials are available, motivation and reading interest become the determining factors of whether these resources are truly utilized optimally. In this study, motivation and reading interest were measured through four indicators: (17) personal motivation to continue reading and developing knowledge, (18) participation in literacy activities such as book clubs or literacy discussions, (19) enthusiasm for reading and writing activities, and (20) feelings when receiving recognition or praise for achievements in literacy activities. These four indicators not only illustrate students' internal drive but also reveal the emotional and social dimensions of literacy engagement. Therefore, this section presents the findings on students' motivation and reading interest at MTs Miftahul Huda in the form of tables and charts, followed by a narrative analysis to uncover respondent trends.

Table 5. Motivation and Reading Interest

No.	Indicator	Very Poor (%)	Poor (%)	Fair (%)	Good (%)	Very Good (%)	Total (%)
17	Personal motivation to keep reading and developing knowledge	0	3	28	46	23	100
18	Participation in literacy activities (book clubs, literacy discussions)	2	6	44	34	14	100
19	Enthusiasm toward reading and writing activities	1	2	33	38	26	100
20	Feelings when receiving recognition (certificates or praise) for literacy achievements	0	1	15	26	58	100

The results presented in Table 5 show that students' motivation and reading interest at MTs Miftahul Huda tend to fall within the good to very good categories. For the indicator of personal motivation to continue reading and developing knowledge, 69% of respondents rated it as good and 23% rated it as very good. This indicates that the majority of students possess a strong internal drive to make reading a means of enhancing knowledge, although 28% of respondents still placed themselves in the fair category.

The indicator of involvement in literacy activities such as book clubs or literacy discussions shows a more varied tendency. A total of 44% of respondents rated it as fair and 34% rated it as good, while only 14% rated it as very good. This condition indicates that students' participation in collective literacy activities is still not optimal, even though individual interest is relatively positive.

For the indicator of enthusiasm toward reading and writing activities, the results are more encouraging, with 38% of respondents rating it as good and 26% as very good. Combined, 64% of students demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm. This confirms that, emotionally, students already possess a strong spirit for literacy activities, although about one-third of respondents (33%) are still in the fair category.

The most prominent finding appears in the indicator of feelings when receiving recognition or praise for literacy achievements. As many as 84% of respondents rated it as good to very good, with a dominant 58% in the very good category. This shows that external appreciation in the form of recognition can serve as a highly powerful motivational factor in fostering students' literacy spirit.

Overall, students' personal motivation to read can be considered relatively high; however, involvement in collective literacy activities still needs to be strengthened. The strategy of providing recognition has proven effective as a stimulus for increasing reading interest; therefore, similar approaches can be expanded to encourage more equitable participation in community-based literacy activities.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of a literacy culture at MTs Miftahul Huda has been carried out fairly well, supported by various complementary aspects. In terms of access to information, the school library and the diversity of reading materials serve as the main strengths in supporting literacy activities. However, digital literacy facilities still require greater attention in order to balance the use of conventional and digital information sources. Teacher involvement also demonstrates

a positive tendency, particularly in assigning tasks that encourage students to actively read, write, and summarize learning materials. These activities contribute to shaping students' reading habits, which in general fall into the category of fairly active to active. Nevertheless, the consistency of reading intensity among students remains varied, indicating the need for more systematic strategies to ensure that reading habits become more evenly distributed. This underscores that the role of teachers remains a key factor in sustaining the continuity of literacy programs in schools.

In addition, the overall quality of reading materials available at the school is considered good, both in terms of thematic diversity and the relevance of content to learning needs. However, the alignment of reading materials with students' personal development needs still requires improvement through the provision of more varied and contextual resources. From the students' internal perspective, reading motivation and interest are also relatively high, particularly in terms of enthusiasm and appreciation when receiving recognition. This factor indicates that psychological encouragement can strengthen students' participation in literacy culture. Nevertheless, involvement in collective literacy activities such as book clubs and literacy discussions remains low, leaving wide opportunities for strengthening literacy collaboration within the school. Overall, the findings of this study emphasize that strengthening digital literacy, increasing the variety of reading materials for personal development, as well as implementing appreciation and mentoring strategies in collective activities should become the main focus. In this way, the literacy culture at MTs Miftahul Huda is expected to develop in a more balanced and sustainable manner, and be capable of responding to the challenges of the digital era.

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