The Role of Literacy in Increasing Children's Reading Interest in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT
Children's ability to understand reading information still needs to be guided and directed. Children's ability to think, increase their vocabulary, and develop a literacy culture still needs to improve in optimizing children's brain performance. This study aimed to explore the role of literacy in increasing early childhood interest in reading. This study uses a qualitative methodology with data collection methods using observation and interviews. The subjects in this study were five students' parents as the primary informants who were randomly selected. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman approach, and the validity of the data uses source triangulation. The findings show that literacy skills are very close to children's daily lives and can be built from infancy. They start when the child can recognize pictures, writing, and numbers to assemble letters into words. Children's reading ability can be influenced by the surrounding environment, namely the family, both parents and teachers. The role of parents can be reading storybooks to children, singing, and reciting nursery rhymes, which is a valuable way of developing literacy in early childhood. So far, learning to read in early childhood is limited to using reading books to provide letter recognition opportunities. Here, the role of literacy through reading books will give a meaningful impression to children learning to read that many people have never known so that it becomes a new thing. The advantage of the results of this study is that the child's reading level has more insight to increase knowledge and a way of thinking to apply much vocabulary.

Keywords: Literacy, Reading Interest, Early Childhood

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is an initial ability that must be possessed by someone in order to learn learning (Widuroyekti et al., 2017). Children's knowledge will increase when children read (Darnis, 2018), try to analyze (da Cruz et al., 2021), permeate, and interpret image symbols (Taylor & Leung, 2020). The introduction of literacy can be started from infancy (Reinoso et al., 2019), and literacy skills will develop well if supported by a comfortable and pleasant environment for children (Elimelech & Aram, 2019). If the family does a lot of literacy activities, the child will get used to imitating (Prayoga & MUryanti, 2021). When families get used to reading, they indirectly set an example for children (Yamamoto et al., 2018).

The problem at this time is that children often get bored reading quickly (da Cruz et al., 2021); besides that, the child complains a lot (Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019). Research from Lemberger-Truelove et al. (2018) shows that the child will be interested if the reading is exciting and contains pictures. Research from Bers (2019) Reading literacy in early childhood must be taught as early as possible to help them face competition in the digitalization era when children are adults. Therefore, some of the existing gaps are the reason for the title raised in this study. The focus is to explore the application of literacy in early childhood, which is rarely discussed.

The fact is that it is not uncommon to find children reading books aloud every day (Kucirkova & Flewitt, 2020). In schools, teachers and parents as supporting factors always facilitate their children, especially in providing books according to their age (O'Dell, 2020). Even though they are just looking around, children can choose the book they like (Aulia et al., 2020). This activity stimulates children to look at pictures, and then children can retell the pictures they see well (Burris, 2020). However, now, parents need to pay more attention to the development of their children (Dindo et al., 2017). They are busy working or busy with their own activities (Cibralic et al., 2021), so children are left alone and even allowed to play with gadgets without knowing the time (Anggraini & Maulidya, 2020). If this condition is allowed to continue, it will affect the child's development, which is not good (Yafie et al., 2020).

Parental assistance to carry out literacy activities is necessary (Kumpulainen et al., 2020). To express this, children can carry out a reading literacy culture (Rif'at & Sugiatno, 2022). The desire to continue reading will arise and repeat itself when the child finds interesting things from what he has seen (Yunita et al., 2019). In this case, storybooks are an option to improve basic literacy skills in early childhood (Şentürk, 2017). By using various story books, parents and teachers are expected to be able to accompany children to read story books (Beecher et al., 2017). Literacy activities can be done anywhere (Taylor & Leung, 2020).

Several relevant studies related to reading literacy from Gerde et al. (2018) revealed that reading literacy for children is needed. Other research from Teale et al. (2020) states that children can be independent to learn through reading literacy. Research from (Maureen et al., 2021) Reading literacy in children needs to be accompanied by teachers and the role of parents. Some of this relevant research can be a review of previous and current research positions. What distinguishes it from previous research is that it raises updates that focus not only on reading literacy but also on other focuses, namely, interest in reading in early childhood, which is rarely discussed.

Reading in early childhood is one of the stages that must be passed as a basis for helping children think. Various ways can be done to introduce letters to children with exciting learning media. However, there are so many accompanying teachers who only assist children in being able to read. The main goal is that children are able to recognize the letters they read and can read fluently and

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well. This is one of the GAPs that has been mistaken so far; these strategies and goals are acceptable. With current utilization, children are allowed not only to read but to be able to explore what they read. This is the main foundation that literacy is essential to be taught in early childhood to help children's interest in reading well and understanding what they read.

Therefore, teachers and schools in the ECD environment can provide solutions to facilitate better children's reading literacy. The way teachers teach in the ECD environment can be improved by using authentic learning strategies and introducing children to phenomena that exist in children's daily lives. This aims to be a solution to change how children learn by providing children's interest in reading, moreover, as an alternative to introducing literacy in early childhood through the environment around the child.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to focus on exploring the role of literacy in increasing early childhood interest in reading. Hopefully, this research will contribute to strengthening the role of education in early childhood and an independent child learning environment.

2. METHOD

A. Research Design

The study adopted a generic qualitative research design as we set out to explore and understand how teachers conceptualise and apply the pedagogy of play in teaching social studies in primaries 1 and 2 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007). The use of generic qualitative research allowed the researchers to understand how the participants make meaning of the research phenomenon (Kennedy, 2016).

B. Participants and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling of six lower primary school social studies teachers constitutes the sample for the study. Two participant teachers were sampled from each of the three selected primary schools. The criterion for selecting teachers was that they needed to teach social studies in primaries 1 and 2. The three selected primary schools for the study are situated in the semi-urban areas of the Okigwe education zone of Imo State, Nigeria.

C. Data Collection Tools and Analysis

Social studies curriculum document was used to collect data for research objective (a), while semi-structured interviews served as data collection methods for research objectives (b) and (c). Descriptive and content analysis was considered the most suitable data analysis method for the study because the study involved interviews and document analysis.

D. Validity of Research

The validity of the research was done through triangulation, whereby data from the different schools as well as within each school was compared, to analyse consistencies and trends in the data. In addition, we provide thick descriptions of participant responses when presenting and discussing the findings.

E. Ethical Procedures

Ethical permission to conduct the research was sought from the faculty of education research ethics committee of the University of Johannesburg and the school principals and research participants in Nigeria.

F. Conflict of Interest

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers have researched children and parents in Kindergarten B, in Methodist Kindergarten, North Jakarta—research conducted with descriptive qualitative research. According to Soltani et al. (2017), descriptive research aims to systematically describe facts and characteristics, the object or subject of research. Research is conducted by asking questions that researchers have prepared. These questions.

Table 1. Interview guidelines

No.	Questions to Parents
1.	Have parents ever read story books to children?
2.	How often do parents read story books to children?
3.	Does your child use gadgets or storybooks more often?
4.	Is your child able to read?
5.	What are the children's difficulties in reading?
6.	What is the difficulty for parents to accompany children in reading?
7.	When children are asked to read story books borrowed from school, are they interested in reading them?
8.	Has the school helped children improve their reading literacy?
9.	What suggestions are expected for the school to develop children's reading skills?

Of the nine questions given, the responses from parents were that the child had been read by their parents on holidays or when there was time. Parents have read books but only sometimes read story books to their children. Children are more often and more interested in using gadgets than story books; children can read but not fluently. Difficulty in reading is because children sometimes need clarification with the language used. This happens because children learn three languages. So, to memorize letters and read, children need help. Parents sometimes find it challenging to accompany them because of their busy work and daily activities. Children want to read if accompanied by parents. In this case, the child needs to be more confident because he cannot read fluently. Schools

have helped children by teaching them how to read and made reading fun activities for children. Suggestions from parents, teachers, and the school are:

1. More often hold programs to foster children's interest in reading
2. More reading practices
3. The teacher motivates children to love reading

The results of the interview information and the questions given were recapitulated and presented in general. There is a lack of assistance from parents in motivating children's interest in reading. Social media allows children to fill their time because parents are busy with work and activities. The ability to read in children is also lacking because they know and learn various languages in their environment, so they become confused and need help reading fluently. From the parents' suggestions and the research results observed, the researchers tried to make suggestions to either the parents or the school. Family and school literacy activities can be applied in collaboration between the school as the party planning the program and with the student's parents as the executor of the activity. These activities are:

1. Let's Read with Mom and Dad
2. This activity is given by giving assignments to parents to read story books to their children. Books that are read with free themes but related to children's storybooks.
3. I am creating a reading corner at school with an attractive atmosphere and decoration.
4. Visit the library with the teacher at school or the library outside the school.
5. Advise parents and children to visit bookstores occasionally according to parents' abilities.
6. Provide fun reading exercises, namely in the form of letter card games or other games, to improve reading skills.
7. Say or sing a song about introducing letters, syllables, and words or inviting children to enjoy reading.
8. Lend storybooks from school to children.
9. Advise parents to create a reading corner at home with attractive decorations.
10. The teacher reads a storybook at a scheduled time (for example, once a week).

Parents are an example for children; thus, children follow what their parents or those closest to them do (Kadar et al., 2020). When children often observe their parents reading and reading books to children, it will arouse their curiosity (Ozturk & Ohi, 2018). Of course, children want to imitate what their parents do (Lemieux & Surampudi, 2019). The world in children is usually done by imitating the people around them; in psychology, it is often called imitation (Ledin & Samuelsson, 2017). Parents are the prime example, and their attitudes and behavior will be imitated (Piccoli et al., 2017).

In everyday life, this imitation is related to social life, so it is not too much to say that social life is internalized within the child based on the imitation factor. According to Khaironi (2017b), imitation, in general, is one's actions to imitate others through behavior, appearance, lifestyle, and even what other people have or do. The family environment will influence the child's growth process. To educate and care for early childhood, the role of a mother is vital so that children experience good growth (I. Nazwa, 2017).

According to Brelsford et al. (2020), the close relationship between mother and child plays a vital role in children's education. Reading activities carried out by fathers and mothers and those

closest to the child will lead to a close relationship with parents and those closest to them. Proximity between parents and children will provide happiness for children so that children will grow optimally in all aspects of development in children (Agbaria, 2020). In early childhood, children will be more sensitive to all the stimuli their environment provides. Children very much like recreational activities with the family. Recreational activities are not only going to recreational areas but can also be done by visiting bookstores or libraries (Cibralic et al., 2021).

With literacy activities in this family, it is hoped that children will grow to the fullest. According to Ozturk and Ohi (2018), there are five ways to develop literacy skills in children: speaking, speaking in a language that children understand (mother tongue), and responding to what they are talking about. Talk to children at any time (when eating together, when going to bed, when traveling, and so on), and talk to the child's face; this will affect the child's psychology, namely, the child feels loved.

In addition to literacy in the family, the school and teachers also play a role in fostering children's interest in reading. Programs or activities for reading story books from parents to children or teachers to students need to be improved. When at school, make reading more enjoyable with attractive decorations. In addition, learning to read while playing is also being carried out to awaken children's willingness to read. Singing activities by singing the sounds of letters, syllables, or words or singing songs that can motivate children to enjoy reading.

Reading books to children at school is something important (Widuroyekti et al., 2017). When finished reading, ask the child what the story's point is. In addition, interpret new vocabulary that children do not understand. Give the child a book with lots of pictures. Write, give children the opportunity to scribble. Provide paper or other media for children to write letters and draw various things. Provide magnetic letters or letter cards to help them read quickly. Invite children to play dramatic. Examples of playing with puppet characters. This will develop children's language.
A child's growth as a toddler is expected to grow optimally (Katsube et al., 2019). This is because it directly or indirectly will affect the child's behavior (L. Truelove et al., 2018). Children's growth will directly determine their language skills (Manas, 2020). Meanwhile, the growth and development of children's language skills will indirectly affect how they see themselves and others (Williamson et al., 2017).

Reading is an essential activity for children (Widuroyekti et al., 2017). When doing reading activities, children will receive various information that is useful for the child himself (Darnis, 2018). Children are expected to be able to recognize and read letters, syllables, and simple sentences (da Cruz et al., 2021) and express and appreciate language in reading activities (Sjöblom et al., 2020). A child is said to be ready to read if he can comply with three things, namely: the child can know how to recognize and form letters, the child has a sufficiently stable understanding of the sounds associated with letters and the alphabet, and also the child begins to recognize words heard in the environment. They are surrounding (Widuroyekti et al., 2017).

In a broad sense, literacy describes a particular way of thinking and doing reading and writing activities (Reinoso et al., 2019) to understand or express ideas or thoughts in writing for specific contexts of use (Listriani et al., 2020). Humans in an educated environment have a set of practices for obtaining, producing, and consuming writing (Prayoga & MUryanti, 2021), and the child also has beliefs about the practice (Pholphirul, 2017). The development of language, literacy, and reading in the pre-kindergarten years occurs through several basic skill levels (Sari et al., 2020), with skills and behaviors becoming more complex and more proficient as children age (Fitria, 2021).

Asari et al. (2019) explain that literacy is not just the ability to read or write, but literacy able to develop skills and abilities that can make a person the ability to think critically (Lawrence et al., 2017) can solve problems (Bellová et al., 2018), can communicate effectively and can develop skills (Ackermann & Siegfried, 2019), and participate actively in the environment (Sartika et al., 2018). In Latin, Litera means involving a writing system that accompanies it. This is useful for human social interaction in its ability to change life (Roemintoyo & Budiarto, 2021). Teachers in kindergarten need to involve parents in motivating children to read and write (Daniels et al., 2020).

At the stage of early childhood development, it has a rapid and fundamental development process for life in the future (Mulyadi, 2019). At an early age, you will experience growth in many aspects while experiencing rapid human growth (Dindo et al., 2017). The age limit for early childhood in the National Education System Law is six years. In the 2003 National Education System Law article 1, various activities in early childhood are carried out by providing learning motivation that helps grow both physically and spiritually so that children are ready to continue their education at the next level (Khaironi, 2017a). According to the National Education System Law in Article 28, the forms of early childhood education are formal and informal education; included in formal education are kindergartens and Raudhatul Athfal (RA) (Eleanora & Sari, 2020).

Meanwhile, what includes informal education is playgroups and daycare centers (TPA) as well as other educational institutions that are the same as early childhood education (Wahyudin, 2022). Everyday learning can be done in the family environment (Wiegand-Grefe et al., 2019). The first foundation in early childhood education is essential for physical growth, moral, character, social, emotional, spiritual, self-discipline, self-concept, and independence (Taylor & Leung, 2020). Early childhood education indirectly occurs since the child is in the womb (Yunita et al., 2019). Putri and Hudah (2019) said the educational process indirectly in early childhood occurs when the child is in the womb, infancy until the child is eight.

Early childhood education aims to provide children with learning experiences and, most importantly, help maximize children's thinking abilities (Hashanah, 2018). The link between family and school education will help children develop their interest in reading (Darnis, 2018). Education at school and at home must go hand in hand to foster interest in reading in early childhood (Danby et al., 2018). In this case, the teacher must involve parents in motivating children to read and write (Febiharsa & Djuniadi, 2018).

Literacy to read and write can be called the predecessor of all kinds of literacy because it has a very long history (Rahayu et al., 2022). Over time, the understanding of literacy has changed. Initially, literacy was often understood as literacy or not being illiterate (Izzah et al., 2020). Literacy can also be understood as understanding the information in written media (Roemintoyo & Budiarto, 2021). Literacy can be understood as the ability to communicate in the social environment of society (Simorangkir & HS, 2021).

High will or great desire for something part of reading interest (Rivandi & Kemala, 2021). Reading, as stated in the Big Indonesian Dictionary, can be interpreted as understanding the contents of what is written orally or only in the heart (Afnida & Suparno, 2020). Understanding interest in reading is a driving force so that children can be interested (Fitria, 2021), pay attention, and be happy with reading activities, so they want to do these activities with pleasure at their own will (Mariadeni et al., 2019).

If a child reads something but is not interested in reading, then the reading activity cannot be done with all sincerity (Oktafiani, 2018). However, if reading is done with a high will or interest,

then reading will be done wholeheartedly (Sartika et al., 2018). What motivates the willingness to read is the ability to read, and the habit of reading motivates the emergence of a reading culture (Ariawan et al., 2018). Interest in reading can be cultivated from an early age to develop into a reading culture (Sudiarni & Sumantri, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

Increasing motivation for reading literacy skills is essential for early childhood. This must be pursued in exciting ways so that young children are more interested in reading and writing. An approach from the closest people is needed, especially assistance from the family to improve reading skills in early childhood. Schools and teachers also motivate children and parents to increase interest in reading in early childhood.

In addition, the school needs to hold exciting activities so that children are more interested in reading. Singing, reciting poetry, or setting up a reading corner at home in a fun way are some ways to get children interested and excited about doing literacy activities. This literacy activity is helpful for early childhood to be ready to read at the next level of education.

The role of literacy will significantly influence the way of learning that can be used as an early childhood need. Literacy is not only obtained from reading books; teachers can also teach literacy through children's experiences. Teachers and parents must work together to encourage children to pay attention to learning to read through exciting learning media. Teacher-parent collaboration is essential, where parents can thoroughly teach children to read at home through digital media and other reading labels. Meanwhile, teachers can help parents by instilling the importance of literacy and its influence on children's reading and learning through various phenomena in children's daily lives. Schools can provide sufficient facilities through reading books specifically programmed to improve reading literacy in early childhood. School supervision of accompanying teachers can encourage teachers to hone their creativity and literacy through literacy training activities and seminars.

Going forward, literacy mainstreaming is essential in early childhood learning environments. For future research, there are many opportunities to be explored through developmental research to quantitatively measure children's literacy, literacy instruments, quality samples, and a wide-reaching school population. Literacy can also be related to children's ability to learn to read, children's numerical literacy, and children's science literacy and their constituent indicators.

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