

The Utilization of the Library in Fostering Students' Learning Skills at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the utilization of the school library in fostering students' learning skills at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar. The research aims to: (1) identify how the library is used to enhance students' learning skills, and (2) explore the challenges in optimizing library utilization for student learning enhancement. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The informants consisted of the principal, the head librarian, teachers, and students. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students utilize the library for reading, completing assignments, and engaging in independent learning activities. Teachers and librarians play a crucial role in guiding students to actively use the library as a learning resource. Library services such as on-site reading, reference access, and group discussion support the development of students' learning skills. However, several obstacles are identified, including limited book collections, inadequate facilities, and the absence of structured literacy programs, all of which hinder optimal library use. The study highlights the need for stronger collaboration among school leaders, teachers, librarians, and students to maximize the library's function in supporting learning. The study implies that schools should strengthen library management and development as a central learning resource. Teachers are expected to motivate students to use library services, librarians need to improve service quality and engagement strategies, and students should cultivate habits of using the library as an enjoyable and beneficial learning environment.

Keywords: *Library Utilization, School Library Management, Students' Learning Skills.*

1) INTRODUCTION

Education is a process aimed at developing students' potential so they are able to think critically and creatively, as well as possess life skills relevant to contemporary demands (Sabar et al., 2023). In practice, the educational process often encounters various learning problems, such as low learning outcomes, low learning motivation, limited ability to understand material independently, and inadequate skills in searching for and processing information (Siregar et al., 2024). These issues can hinder the achievement of 21st-century competencies, which emphasize the importance of learner autonomy, information literacy, and problem-solving skills (Mania et al., 2024).

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One important effort to address these problems is ensuring the availability of adequate learning resources. Good learning resources not only help students comprehend the material but also encourage them to develop effective study habits, broaden their knowledge, and enhance their critical thinking skills (Fransiska et al., 2024). Among the various learning resources available in schools, the school library holds a strategic role.

The school library is one of the essential components in the implementation of education (Firmansyah, 2022; Nuryadika & Hariri, 2021). Its function extends beyond serving as a storage space for books; it also acts as a learning resource center that supports the development of students' literacy skills, information-seeking abilities, and independent learning. In the context of 21st-century education, competencies such as self-directed learning, information literacy, and critical thinking are fundamental skills that must be cultivated from an early age (Amin et al., 2025; Majid et al., 2024; Nur et al., 2024; Rusmin et al., 2024). Ideally, the school library should play a key role in fostering these skills by providing diverse reading materials, comfortable learning facilities, and structured literacy services.

Various studies have shown that the utilization of school libraries contributes significantly to the development of students' learning skills (Afrilia & Sulaeman, 2024; Marni, 2017; Saragih et al., 2025; Triyuwono et al., 2025). Well-managed libraries have been proven to increase reading interest, broaden students' knowledge, and help them build effective learning habits. However, these positive outcomes are highly dependent on the quality of available facilities, the completeness of the collection, the role of librarians, teacher support, and the literacy culture established within the school environment.

In reality, this ideal condition has not yet been fully achieved in many schools. Numerous school libraries remain underutilized by students (Hasriani, 2025; Kastro, 2020). Low utilization can be influenced by several factors, including limited reading interest, insufficient book collections, inadequate learning facilities, and the absence of structured literacy programs. These challenges can hinder the library's function as a learning resource center, thereby affecting the development of students' learning skills, which may not reach their optimal potential.

SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar, as an Islamic-based educational institution, provides a school library that is accessible to all students. This library is expected to serve as a facility that encourages students to read, search for references, engage in discussions, and develop independent learning habits. However, based on preliminary observations and discussions with the school, the utilization of the

library has not yet reached an optimal level. Students have not fully used the library as a source of learning, while the existing facilities and available collections also face several limitations.

Given these conditions, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study to understand how students use the library within the learning context and to what extent the library contributes to the development of their learning skills. Such a study is important to provide a comprehensive overview of library utilization, identify emerging challenges, and formulate recommendations for the school to enhance the effectiveness of the library as a central learning resource.

2) METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. This approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena experienced by research subjects regarding the use of the school library in fostering students' learning skills. Qualitative research allows the researcher to explore the meaning behind participants' actions, perceptions, and experiences, producing findings that capture not only factual information but also the underlying interpretations that reflect real conditions in the field. Through the phenomenological approach, the researcher examined the lived experiences of informants in utilizing the library, enabling a deeper understanding of the conscious meaning emerging from phenomena occurring within the school environment.

The study was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar, located on Jl. Muhammad Jufri No. 34, Tallo District, Makassar City. The site was chosen based on its relevance to the research focus, as the school has a library that functions as a learning resource center and requires further investigation regarding how effectively it is used to support students' learning skills. Its strategic and easily accessible location also facilitated intensive observation and data collection.

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the Principal, the Head of the Library, teachers, and students, selected based on their roles, experiences, and involvement in the utilization of the library. Secondary data included supporting documents such as library archives, photographs, activity records, and other relevant notes gathered during the research process. All data analyzed were descriptive in nature, comprising words, sentences, conversations, and visual documentation.

Data were collected using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly in the library to capture authentic information regarding activities, facility conditions, and the behavior of students and library staff in utilizing the space. Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain detailed and meaningful information from the key informants. This interview format allowed the researcher to ask questions flexibly while still adhering to a prepared guide, ensuring that the data remained focused yet rich in detail. Documentation was used to complement observation and interview data through visual evidence and formal records that reflected the library's condition and activities.

Data analysis was conducted through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the researcher selected, simplified, and focused raw data into relevant information aligned with the research questions. The data display stage involved organizing the information into systematic descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusion drawing was carried out gradually, beginning with preliminary conclusions and progressing toward more solid, verified conclusions based on field findings.

To ensure the validity of the data, the study employed source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was performed by comparing information obtained from different informants. Technique triangulation was achieved by examining data through multiple methods—observation, interviews, and documentation. Time triangulation involved repeating data collection at different times to ensure data consistency. In addition to triangulation, data validity was strengthened through the use of various supporting references, including photographs, interview recordings, and other documents gathered during the research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Utilization of the School Library in Fostering Students' Learning Skills at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar

The findings of the study show that the library at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar plays an important role as a learning resource center, although its facilities and infrastructure are still limited. Library maintenance is carried out regularly to ensure that it remains comfortable for students to use. The head librarian explained that maintenance activities are conducted together with students,

particularly in keeping the books neat and clean. Even when the library was affected by flooding, the books were immediately moved to a safer place to prevent damage, demonstrating concern for the continuity of library services. This aligns with the principal's statement that facility maintenance is carried out gradually in accordance with budget capacity, including cleaning shelves, repairing facilities, and arranging books periodically.

On the other hand, students' use of the library is influenced by external encouragement from teachers. Teachers actively integrate learning activities with the use of the library, for example by assigning tasks that require students to search for references or read storybooks related to the subject matter. The Indonesian language teacher, for instance, instructs students to read various stories for presentation purposes, while other teachers intentionally design assignments that can only be completed by searching for sources in the library. These strategies indirectly cultivate students' habits of visiting and continuously utilizing the library.

Students' statements also reinforce these findings. Several students revealed that their primary reason for going to the library was to complete assignments or search for additional references. However, many also visited simply to read storybooks or look up vocabulary in dictionaries. The head librarian added that students use the library to read, discuss, and access textbooks as learning resources, despite the limited collection.

In addition to being a place to complete assignments, the library also functions to foster independent learning skills. Students come to the library when there is no teacher in class to search for references on their own, read, and discuss with friends. This indicates that the library provides a conducive environment for independent learning activities. In line with Suherman (2022), school libraries play a role in developing reading habits, enhancing information literacy, and encouraging students to learn independently. The findings in this study support this theory, as students show initiative in learning without direct instruction from teachers.

The principal also strives to improve the effectiveness of the library's function even though there is no specific literacy program in place. The school encourages teachers and students to utilize the library more actively and plans to develop programs such as group reading sessions or book discussions. This effort is consistent with Nurhabibah et al. (2023), who emphasize that a comfortable library environment and a diverse collection can increase student engagement in learning even without direct teacher guidance.

The library offers several services, including reference services, on-site reading services, discussion spaces, and group study areas. However, book borrowing services are limited to school hours due to the small collection. Students reported frequently using the reference and on-site reading services, which help them find answers to their school assignments. The variety of services indicates that the library continues to function as a learning support space, even though it does not yet have a formal literacy program. Overall, the utilization of the library in fostering students' learning skills is evident from students' habits of independently searching for information, discussing, and reading without needing teacher instructions. At SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar, these practices have begun to emerge, although they are not yet fully systematic.

From a management perspective, the school strives to maintain the feasibility of the library's facilities and infrastructure to ensure optimal use. Moving books during floods and routine cleaning demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a comfortable library environment. Support from the principal in supervising and guiding the library also contributes to strengthening the school's literacy culture. Thus, the library at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar functions not only as a place to read or search for references but also as a space for independent learning that enhances students' literacy skills and learning abilities. Although the facilities are still simple and there is no dedicated literacy program, the library continues to be actively utilized through the support of teachers, the principal, and the librarian. This shows that a functionally managed library—though not yet ideal—can still make a significant contribution to students' learning processes.

Barriers to Utilizing the Library to Enhance Learning Skills at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar

The school library is ideally a center of learning resources that supports the development of students' learning skills, such as critical reading, information literacy, and independent learning. However, findings at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar show that the utilization of the library has not been optimal due to several obstacles that hinder its function as a learning facility. This condition is consistent with Lestari & Ramadan (2021) who asserted that inadequate facilities and infrastructure can reduce the attractiveness of a library and directly impact students' low interest in using it.

Based on interviews with the principal, the head librarian, teachers, and students, several major challenges were identified. First, the limited book collection is a significant barrier. The existing

collection does not include sufficient variations of reading materials to support diverse learning needs. Teachers and the librarian acknowledged that the minimal collection causes students to lack references that align with the learning material, resulting in underdeveloped information literacy skills. This finding aligns with Fitriani & Wahyuni (2021) who stated that insufficient variation in collections is a key factor in decreasing students' library visits.

Second, the library's physical facilities are also limited. The reading room is considered not sufficiently comfortable and cannot accommodate many students, especially when the library is also used by the senior high school students within the same foundation. Several students stated that the narrow space often makes it difficult for them to study or discuss freely. This obstacle is in line with Rahayu (2020) who argued that an effective library must provide a conducive and adequate learning environment for students.

Third, students' low reading interest is another inhibiting factor. Teachers noted that many students are not accustomed to reading independently and still perceive the library merely as a place to find materials for assignments rather than a space to broaden their knowledge. This problem is exacerbated by the absence of a structured school literacy program. In fact, literature such as that presented by Nurmalasari (2022) shows that the success of library programs is greatly influenced by teacher involvement in integrating literacy activities into learning.

Fourth, the limited operational hours of the library further hinder its utilization. Some students reported difficulty accessing the library at certain times because it is not open throughout school hours. Moreover, the absence of an easy-to-understand book arrangement system causes some students to struggle in finding the reading materials they need.

These constraints indicate that the challenges in utilizing the library do not only stem from facilities and collections but also from the lack of literacy habituation within the school environment. From an educational management perspective, Mulyasa (2021) explains that optimizing the function of a library requires collaboration among all parties—principals, teachers, librarians, and students. Without such synergy, the library cannot fully serve as a center for learning resources.

Nevertheless, the school has made efforts to address some of the existing challenges. The principal has taken strategic steps by gradually increasing the book collection through alumni donation policies. Teachers have also begun encouraging students to make more active use of the library in completing assignments. The librarian has been organizing the collection and services as effectively as

possible to maintain the library's functionality. These efforts need to be strengthened with specific literacy programs, such as shared reading activities, guided reading sessions, and regular book discussions, to foster reading interest and independent learning.

In conclusion, the findings and discussion indicate that the main barriers to utilizing the library at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar include limited collections, insufficient facilities, low reading interest among students, restricted operational hours, and the absence of structured literacy programs. However, with the improvement efforts currently being implemented, the library has the potential to become a more effective facility for enhancing students' learning skills if managed consistently and supported by all elements of the school.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the library of SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Makassar plays an important role in supporting students' learning skills, particularly in enhancing information literacy, fostering independent learning habits, and assisting students in locating and processing various learning resources. Although the school does not yet have a structured literacy program, the library is still utilized as a space for reading, discussion, and completing academic assignments. The support of teachers and the principal, along with a relatively conducive library environment, strengthens the library's contribution to students' learning processes. However, the utilization of the library is still hindered by several challenges, including limited book collections, inadequate reading facilities, low reading interest among some students, restricted operating hours, and suboptimal service systems and collection arrangements. These issues contribute to low visitation frequency and prevent the library from functioning optimally as a central learning resource. The school has made improvement efforts through the gradual expansion of its book collection, strengthening the role of teachers in encouraging library use, and maintaining library facilities to ensure a comfortable learning environment. These steps reflect the school's commitment to optimizing the library's role as an integral component of the learning process. As a recommendation, the school should develop a structured literacy program, improve the quality and quantity of its collections, adjust or extend library operating hours, and strengthen collaboration between teachers and librarians in designing library-based learning activities.

Through these efforts, the library has the potential to become a more effective literacy center that fosters an active, independent, and sustainable learning culture among students.

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