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THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN FOSTERING LITERACY SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS AT MADRASAH ALIYAH NURUL FALAH, **BULUKUMBA**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of librarians and the driving and inhibiting factors in fostering a literacy spirit among students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency. This research employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. A total of 9 informants, consisting of librarians and students, participated in the study from January to March 2024. The findings reveal that librarians play a significant role in fostering students' literacy spirit. This role is realized through various efforts, such as maintaining the quality of reading room arrangements, creating a conducive learning environment, and organizing literacy activities, including 30- and 45day writing challenges on social media. Additionally, librarians established organizations such as the Young Writers Community (KPM), the Arts and Literacy Studio (SASLI), and the Madrasa Press, which support literacy activities. The driving factors for success include programs aligned with students' talents and interests and their strong enthusiasm for participating in organizational activities. However, several inhibiting factors were also identified, such as a lack of understanding of the student's talents, low literacy interest among some students, minimal communication with parents, and the negative impact of technology. The implications of this study demonstrate a transformational impact on students' literacy spirit, both in educational aspects and character development. The results also highlight the need for more strategic management to address the obstacles encountered in this process, challenging us to find innovative solutions and motivating us to continue our efforts in fostering literacy.

Keywords: Librarian role; student literacy; Islamic boarding school

1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy skills are one of the main pillars of education, playing a vital role in shaping individuals' academic abilities and character. According to Harahap et al. (2022), literacy skills are essential competencies that students must master practically in this era of disruption, serving as a key ability to navigate significant changes driven by digital transformation in the 21st century. Fundamentally, an individual's ability to read and write is the foundation for broadening their understanding of literacy in a deeper context (Amri & Rochmah, 2021). Literacy extends beyond the essential ability to read and write; it also includes the skills to comprehend, evaluate, and effectively use information daily. It is a concept that surpasses mere foundational reading and writing skills (Dharana, 2024; Nasrullah, 2020). In education, literacy forms the foundation that supports students' success in addressing academic challenges and social life in the modern era. Therefore, efforts to enhance students' literacy spirit are integral to educational development (Mulyati et al., 2024).

Student literacy development, at the Madrasah Aliyah level, encompasses a broader dimension as it focuses on academic abilities and moral and spiritual formation. According to Alfathon and Alberto (2022) and Kusairi (2021), the tradition of knowledge and literacy in Islamic boarding schools is a deeply rooted legacy that has significantly influenced the development of science in Indonesia. Madrasah Aliyah, particularly those in a pesantren environment, face unique challenges in building a literacy culture. These challenges, such as limited facilities, low reading interest among some students, and the negative impact of technology, can divert students' attention from literacy activities. A lack of understanding of information highlights that Indonesian students' literacy skills remain below the global average (Nazariah et al., 2023). Understanding these unique challenges is crucial in our efforts to foster literacy in Islamic educational institutions.

Librarians play a central role as facilitators, motivators, and supporters in instilling a literacy spirit among students. To be recognised as a competent professional, a librarian must possess in-depth knowledge of library science, which can be acquired through formal education or participation in specialised training and courses (Nazar, M.A., 2022). As managers of information resources, librarians are responsible for presenting library collections and initiating innovative literacy programs relevant to students' interests. In Madrasah Aliyah environments within a pesantren setting, librarians are also tasked with creating a conducive learning atmosphere, connecting students with various learning resources, and encouraging their active participation in literacy activities. This includes organising literacy activities, maintaining the quality of reading room arrangements, and fostering a love for reading and writing among students (Mardhatillah, 2023).

This research is motivated by the importance of understanding the role of librarians in supporting the development of students' literacy. Several previous studies on the role of librarians, such as the study by Anjaswuri, F., & Deya, S. (2021) titled "The Role of Librarians in Increasing Students' Reading Interest and Habits at SDN Gunung Batu 2 Kota," published in the Journal of Education and Teaching for Elementary School Teachers, demonstrate that librarians play a significant role in shaping literacy culture among students. Through structured library management, librarians implement a mandatory class visit system according to a schedule.

Additionally, library collections are regularly updated to attract students to new reading materials. Special programs like reading corners, storytelling competitions, and poetry reading sessions are also organized to provide enjoyable reading experiences.

Furthermore, research by Saroya et al. (2023) titled "The Role of Librarians in Enhancing Students' Motivation to Read at SMA Negeri 1 Ciwidey" found that librarians at SMA Negeri 1 Ciwidey play an essential role in improving students' reading motivation. This is achieved through procuring collections, extended service hours, study guidance, and attractive library layouts. These roles help students access information, increase reading motivation, and create a more supportive library experience.

This study focuses on the Islamic education environment, specifically at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency. This pesantren possesses a unique characteristic, combining religious and academic education, which presents both opportunities and challenges in developing students' literacy. Through this research, the authors aim to explore the role of librarians in fostering a literacy spirit among students while identifying the factors that support and hinder the success of these efforts.

The primary objective of this study is to reveal how librarians can contribute to cultivating students' literacy spirit through various programs and approaches implemented. Furthermore, this research seeks to provide strategic recommendations to assist other madrasahs and pesantren develop more effective and sustainable literacy programs.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to explore librarians' role in enhancing students' literacy spirit at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency. The research was conducted in Garuntungan Village, Kindang District, Bulukumba Regency, from January 22 to February 22, 2024. The data sources include primary data obtained through interviews with nine informants, comprising librarians and students, and secondary data consisting of supporting documents from relevant institutions.

Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Direct observation was conducted to understand the phenomena, particularly regarding the role of librarians in supporting literacy. In-depth interviews were used to gather information from librarians and students about their experiences, perceptions, and challenges. Documentation, including field notes and photographs, supported the research findings.

The research instruments included interview guides, observation notes, and relevant documents collected using tools such as pens and mobile phones. The data obtained were analyzed using an inductive approach, starting with data reduction to simplify and select relevant information. This was followed by presenting the data in narrative form and drawing conclusions based on field findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) The Role of Librarians in Fostering the Literacy Spirit Among Students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency.

Librarians play a crucial role in the success of libraries. They are responsible for various operational aspects, including planning, procurement, management, and providing user services. In performing their duties, librarians must ensure fair and equitable services to all users without discrimination. This role positions librarians as key factors in achieving the success and effectiveness of libraries as centres of information and learning.

Fostering the literacy spirit among students requires strong synergy between schools or madrasahs, libraries, and the students themselves. Schools play a vital role in encouraging students to broaden their knowledge and perspectives, while libraries, as rich information centres, must be capable of providing optimal services. The following outlines the roles of librarians in fostering the literacy spirit among students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency:

1. Librarians Strive to Maintain Quality Reading Room Arrangements

Librarians at the Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng Library in Bulukumba Regency are committed to maintaining the comfort of the reading room through attractive and functional arrangements. The design of tables, chairs, and bookshelves is tailored to ensure that users feel comfortable and enjoy their time in the library. A clean and well-organised environment is a top priority to provide students with an optimal reading experience.

However, considering the large number of students, the library's reading room capacity sometimes poses a challenge. To address this, librarians have provided additional outdoor reading spaces. This initiative allows students to have alternative, comfortable study areas even when the main library is complete.

The outdoor reading space offers a calm atmosphere and pleasant scenery, creating a more relaxed and refreshing reading experience. This area is used for reading and serves as a space for students to complete organisational tasks without disrupting activities inside the library. This demonstrates the librarians' innovation in comprehensively supporting the students' learning needs. Pustakawan Melakukan Berbagai Jenis Kegiatan dan Mendirikan Organisasi yang Bergerak di Bidang Literasi

a. Organising 30- and 45-day Writing Challenges on Social Media

Librarians at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng in Bulukumba organized a writing competition lasting 30 to 45 days in collaboration with the Bulukumba District Library and Archives Office. The competition aimed to improve literacy skills among students. Participants were required to write and upload their daily works on social media, which enhanced their writing skills and encouraged them to actively share knowledge and ideas through digital platforms.

Although the challenge was demanding, requiring participants to write consistently, it effectively stimulated creativity and perseverance among the students. Only a few participants completed the competition due to the strict rules and the requirement to upload work daily.

However, for those who succeeded, the competition provided significant benefits in honing their literacy skills and establishing writing habits that could be advantageous in the future. The success of this competition also highlighted the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and related agencies in promoting literacy development within the community.

As part of efforts to broaden literacy skills, the librarians at Madrasah Aliyah also established an organisation named Pers Madrasah Aliyah. This organisation primarily focuses on writing news and documenting school activities. Initially, the organisation had only 10 members interested in journalism. Over time, the number of members grew to 25, reflecting students' enthusiasm for learning and developing writing skills.

Through intensive training and mentorship, members of Pers learned the basics of journalism and how to craft engaging and informative news articles. This initiative has become a platform for students to refine their writing abilities while contributing to the documentation and dissemination of school activities.

b. Establishing a Student Organisation Named Pers Madrasah

To expand literacy skills, the librarians at Madrasah Aliyah established an organisation called Pers Madrasah Aliyah. This organisation focuses primarily on writing news and documenting school activities. Initially, it consisted of only 10 students who were interested in journalism. However, the number of members increased to 25 over time, reflecting the students' enthusiasm for learning and improving their writing skills. Through intensive training and mentoring, members of Pers learned the basics of journalism and how to craft engaging and informative news articles.

Members of Pers Madrasah Aliyah actively cover and report on various school events, including commemorations of significant days, competitions, and extracurricular activities. They are also given opportunities to report on events outside the school, providing valuable experience in understanding the dynamics of field reporting.

Through this process, the literacy skills of the members continue to grow, particularly in writing, editing, and systematically presenting information. Additionally, their published works in school media and on social media serve as a positive promotional tool for the madrasah while actively inspiring other students to develop their literacy potential.

c. Establishing an Organization Called the Young Writers Community (KPM)

In 2022, the librarians of Madrasah Aliyah expanded their literacy initiatives by establishing the Young Writers Community (KPM), inspired by the success of previous writing challenges. This community serves as a platform for honing writing skills and fostering a literacy spirit among students. Initially, KPM consisted of eight members with a strong interest in writing. To date, the community has produced 16 works, including solo books and anthologies, reflecting its members' improved writing, reading, and critical thinking abilities. KPM also serves as a learning space for its members, offering training and collaboration opportunities in publishing their works.

KPM envisions cultivating consistent writing habits among students while facilitating the publication of their creations. The community aims to establish a sustainable literacy culture, both in reading and writing. Furthermore, KPM encourages its members to become more sensitive to social and environmental issues around them, ensuring their writings are aesthetically pleasing and contextually relevant. With full support from the madrasah, KPM has successfully created a strong literacy ecosystem, broadening students' horizons and making reading and writing integral parts of their daily culture.

d. Establishing the Arts and Literacy Studio (SASLI)

The Arts and Literacy Studio (SASLI), established in 2019, is a platform for students to develop their artistic talents while strengthening their literacy skills. SASLI provides a creative space for writing poetry, making short films, and participating in performing arts. This support stimulates students' creativity and gives them opportunities to shine in provincial and national art competitions. Several works from SASLI have been published, including short films like The Underestimated Father, Hijrah and Ramadhan, and Teka Teki Dini, all uploaded to YouTube.

SASLI's activities focus on artistic exploration and positively impact the development of critical and collaborative thinking skills among students. Through the experience of producing artwork, SASLI members learn to tackle challenges, work in teams, and present their creative ideas to a broader audience. Furthermore, SASLI supports students in completing school assignments that require creativity. As such, SASLI is an arts activity centre and a multidimensional learning medium that equips students with relevant skills for the future.

This literacy organisation is designed to nurture individual talents and build discipline and commitment in the creative process. Members learn to work together in teams, manage their time effectively, and boost their self-confidence. This organisation's success is reflected in its members' achievements, both in the arts and in literacy. SASLI and KPM have created a productive learning environment at the madrasah, encouraging students to actively write, read, and create proud works of art.



Figure 1: Collaborative Works of Students from Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency

b) Driving and Inhibiting Factors for Librarians in Fostering the Literacy Spirit Among Students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency

1. Driving Factors

Behind the success in fostering the literacy spirit among students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, there are driving factors that assist librarians in nurturing students' literacy spirit. These factors include:

a. Library Programs Aligned with Students' Talents and Interests

The organisations designed by librarians at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng play a vital role in fostering the literacy spirit among students. Through programs such as the Young Writers Community (KPM), Pers Madrasah, and the Arts and Literacy Studio (SASLI), students are provided with space to express their interests and talents. These programs help students develop writing, artistic, and language skills, essential in building strong literacy habits within the madrasah environment.

The librarians' sensitivity to the diverse interests and talents of the students is a key factor in the success of these programs. The librarians establish organisations and act as mentors who actively guide students according to their aspirations and goals. This approach gives students real experiences in honing their literacy skills while also building their confidence to create in various fields of interest.

The freedom for students to choose organisations aligned with their interests becomes a significant motivator for active participation. With various relevant and beneficial activities, students can explore their talents and learn to work in teams, think creatively, and understand literacy values more deeply. This process indirectly helps them prepare for future challenges.

However, although many students enthusiastically participate in the program, some remain hesitant to engage due to confusion in choosing the proper organisation. This becomes a challenge for librarians to continue socialising and motivating all students to take advantage of the opportunities provided. With collective commitment, this program has great potential to create a more inclusive and progressive literacy culture at the madrasah.

b. High Enthusiasm of Students to Participate in Organisations

The high enthusiasm of students to participate in organisations at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency, is a significant driving factor in fostering their literacy spirit. The various organisations available, particularly those focused on literacy, allow students to choose fields that align with their interests and talents. This freedom encourages students' creativity to continue developing, creating an inclusive and healthy competitive learning environment.

The competitive spirit between organisations motivates students to improve their skills. This competition is not about bringing others down but encouraging each member to achieve their goals. The success of one organisation often inspires others to continue striving to provide their best, creating a harmonious atmosphere among the literacy communities within the madrasah.

The solidarity among organisations also forms a strong foundation for fostering the literacy spirit of students. The interactions and collaborations built strengthen the bond between members and enhance the overall quality of the organisational programs. The shared challenges help students manage their time wisely, learn new things, and instil deep literacy values.

Through these various organisations, librarians and madrasah mentors have successfully created an ecosystem that fully supports the development of students' literacy. The freedom to create, the motivation to achieve goals, and cross-organisational collaboration are the key drivers of success in fostering a literacy spirit within the madrasah. This program strengthens students' talents and interests and helps create a literate generation that can contribute in the future.

2. Inhibiting Factors

Among the various efforts made by the library management in carrying out its duties to foster the literacy spirit among students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng, Bulukumba Regency, there are specific challenges faced, including the following:

a. Incomplete Identification of Students' Talents

One of the obstacles in fostering the literacy spirit among students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng is the incomplete identification of students' talents and interests. This lack of awareness reduces some students' participation in literacy programs. Additionally, students who have not yet discovered their interests tend to negatively affect the literacy atmosphere at the madrasah, either through behaviour that does not support the initiative or by influencing other students. Librarians are making significant efforts to identify students' talents and interests so that they can be directed toward appropriate programs.

This issue is further exacerbated by the introverted nature and difficulty of socialising for some students who do not participate in any organisation. Students rarely get involved in social activities and often find it hard to engage in literacy activities. This situation not only hinders their development but also creates challenges for madrasah administrators in creating an inclusive literacy environment.

External influences also serve as an inhibiting factor, especially for students exposed to environments that do not support literacy. Additionally, reluctance to try new things makes some students hesitate to join literacy programs. This situation highlights the need for a more personalised and intensive approach to raising their awareness and motivation to participate in existing literacy programs.

b. Low Literacy Awareness Among Some Students

The low literacy awareness among some students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng is one of the factors inhibiting the fostering of the literacy spirit. Many students do not fully understand the importance of the literacy programs offered by the library. One of the leading causes is the lack of early reading and literacy habits, influenced by the role of family and the surrounding environment. The absence of parental support in motivating children's reading interests also hinders the growth of a literacy culture.

Environmental factors that do not support literacy, such as students' tendency to prefer playing outside school rather than prioritising reading, exacerbate this condition. Furthermore, the low literacy awareness also makes students reluctant to join organisations that could help them sharpen their talents and interests in literacy. Their indifference to the importance of literacy for the future indicates that some students do not see the direct benefits of literacy activities in their lives.

The influence of modern technology also presents a significant challenge. Students are likelier to spend time on technological devices without utilising them for literacy activities. This situation is worsened by the lack of attention from parents or the community to monitor the use of technology for educational purposes. Therefore, a more intensive approach is needed to improve literacy awareness, including early habits, family support, and strategies that integrate technology as an engaging learning medium.

c. Lack of Communication with Students' Parents

The lack of communication between librarians and students' parents at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng is one of the obstacles to fostering the literacy spirit. Parents, who should be the primary supporters of their children's development, often cannot play an active role due to their busy schedules, especially those who work as farmers. This profession requires them to be in the fields from morning until evening, leaving little time for communication with the madrasah or supporting their children's activities.

Additionally, some parents lack the skills to use technology, such as smartphones, the primary means of modern communication. This further complicates librarians' efforts to engage parents in literacy programs. Parents' support for their children's activities at the madrasah is often delegated to other family members, such as older siblings or relatives, who may not fully understand the child's literacy needs.

Despite these challenges, librarians communicate with parents through various means, including direct engagement, when opportunities arise. However, this barrier highlights the need for further efforts, such as providing technology training for parents and enhancing coordination between the madrasah, librarians, and families, to create a literacy ecosystem that optimally supports students' development.

d. The Influence of Technology

Technology development, while having positive impacts, also hinders literacy development among students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah Borongganjeng. Many students prefer playing games or watching movies instead of reading books or engaging in learning activities that could enhance their knowledge. This is due to their dependence on quick and easily accessible entertainment through technology, which is more appealing than literacy activities that are perceived as tiring.

Furthermore, excessive use of technology leads to psychological distractions and reduces students' focus on positive activities such as reading. Although technology provides access to a wealth of information, it is often used for unproductive entertainment. Students are more frequently involved in playing games or watching shows that are not educational, which can negatively affect the quality of their study time.

Therefore, it is crucial for students to wisely balance their time between using technology for educational purposes and entertainment. Without proper management, reliance on technology can have a detrimental impact on their literacy development. Librarians and madrasah authorities must emphasise the importance of using technology effectively to enhance knowledge and skills, ensuring that students do not become trapped in technology that harms their future.

4. CONCLUSION

This study discusses the role of librarians in fostering the literacy spirit among students at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Nurul Falah, Bulukumba. Librarians play a crucial role in the management of quality reading spaces, the organisation of literacy challenges such as 30- and 45-day writing competitions, and the establishment of literacy organisations like the Young Writers Community (KPM), Pers Madrasah, and the Arts and Literacy Studio (SASLI). These programs aim to improve students' writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. The driving factors for success include the high enthusiasm of students to participate in organisations and the librarians' sensitivity in creating programs that align with students' interests. However, challenges such as low literacy awareness, lack of communication with parents, and the influence of technology also pose obstacles. Some students prefer instant entertainment through technology rather than engaging in literacy activities, while parents' busy schedules reduce their support for their children's literacy development. This study highlights the importance of synergy between librarians, madrasahs, and families in creating an inclusive literacy ecosystem. The management of technology as a literacy tool, the socialisation of library programs, and collaboration with parents need to be enhanced to build a generation of students who are literate, creative, and competitive in the future.

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