

Developing the Islamic Reading Center Through Fostering the Village Youth Organization to Improve Children's Literacy

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ABSTRACT

The study of literacy always becomes the main issue in education, because this skill is a benchmark for the progress and development of a nation. Indonesia is a large country with a large area, however, with its wide area it turns out to be an obstacle in terms of equalizing education in Indonesia. In fact, some rural villages have not had adequate access to education and it causes the paradigm about education among rural villages is less open. Moreover, Indonesia is a country where majority of the population are Muslims, so the literacy skills improvement program which is being pursued should have an Islamic value. Unfortunately, there have not been many reviews about increasing literacy skills based on Islamic education. Therefore, it needs an effort that can develop literacy skills for children especially for the nation's next generation. The fostering of villages youth organizations through the Islamic Reading Center (IRC) which aims to increase children's literacy is a literacy collaborative (LC) program starting from rural villages' level, local government and central government

which involves youth organizations from the rural villages' level, sub-district, regency, education and culture agency, social agency, regional and national libraries, and the directorate general of Islamic education of religious ministry of Republic of Indonesia. The Islamic reading center provides Islamic books and media that can be managed by the youth organizations in a rural village. So, through Islamic reading centers and literacy activities, it can increase literacy skills in rural villages which need more attention in education.

Keywords: Children Literacy, Islamic Reading Center, Youth Organizations of Rural Villages, Literacy Collaborative Program (LC).

A. Introduction

The 4.0 industrialization era is an era that technology and communication developed rapidly. In this era, there is no one does not know the term "gadget", and almost all level of society is familiar with a gadget, including children and teenagers. Unwittingly, the rapid development of the technologies turns out to have a major effect on the fading of the culture of reading interest in our society, especially social media which becomes the main issue of society currently. Technology makes people, especially children and teenagers leave conventional things like reading books.

It is ironic when the phenomenon of the existence of social media compared to people's interest in reading culture. UNESCO released the index of reading interest of Indonesian people is 0.001%, it can be announced from a thousand Indonesians, only one Indonesians has reading interest. Data from the World's Most Literacy Nations also states that Indonesia ranks 60th out of 61 countries assessed for reading interest index, Indonesia only beat Botswana, one of the least developed countries in the South African region. It is ironic indeed, that Indonesia has abundant

human resources, but lack people who has reading interest. In fact, by reading a book we will get new knowledge which is might be can't be obtained by the internet or social media.

According to Rahim, (2007), reading will determine the quality of a society or nation, he explained that a low reading interest will greatly affect to the quality of a nation since with a low reading interest, society is not able to know and follow the development of science and information in the world and will ultimately have an impact on the backwardness of the nation itself. Wahyuni (2010) added several aspects that caused the low interest in reading of children and teenagers, including family and surrounding communities that did not support reading habits, the low purchasing power to buy books that were related to the low level of the economy and the low awareness of the importance of books, then also due to the lack of the number of libraries or places to borrow and read books in our society, especially in rural village areas.

According to Andina (2016) reading activities need to be done everywhere. The existence of Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 year 2015 concerning the Growth of Character Building contains that all school members must spare 15 minutes to read non-textbooks before teaching and learning activities begin. This is the first step to build a climate of reading fondness at school. The program then strengthened to habituate this program outside the school environment. Children also need to get used to reading books at home. According to Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal (2005) home and social environments support greatly in influencing children's language skills and early literacy. Reading together is also a process that supports the development of reading in the early days of school.

In this regard, it is very important to build the spirit of reading for children today, especially those in rural village areas who still need attention in the education sector. One of the real efforts that can be done is to create an Islamic reading center that

can be used together, both as a means to borrow books or a place to read together with friends. Islamic reading center is a center for the provision of various Islamic books and reading media that can be managed by the youth organizations of rural villages, Islamic reading centers will be able to improve children's literacy skills in rural village areas that still need a lot of attention in education.

Regarding these issues, lecturers other than educators in higher education should provide assistance to improve children's literacy skills as a form of a dedication to the surrounding society. The culture of reading will increase public awareness of the importance of education and open up new views for the society, especially for people in rural village areas where literacy is still quite low. It needs to be known that the low literacy ability will make the nation's competitiveness low in global competition. So, with the assistance of the village youth organizations establishing an Islamic reading center is expected to be a means to build the virus reading habits and improve literacy skills in the surrounding villages so that they can improve education, especially Islamic education in the village society in general. The dedication aims to foster village youth organizations through an Islamic reading center to improve children's literacy in Mojo village and make effective efforts through educational activities for children, especially school-age children who cannot read yet.

Based on the results of relevant theory studies, Echols & Shadily (2003) suggested that literacy comes from the word literacy which means literacy. Furthermore, Kuder & Hasit (2002) suggested that literacy is all the process of learning to read and write that a person learns including four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Literacy is closely related to a person's ability to read, write, speak, and process information obtained to solve the problems encountered in daily life. While Kew, Given and Brass (2011) emphasize that understanding literacy skills is not just literacy, but more than that. In practice, literacy means reading and writing certain

types of text in specific ways in certain contexts and this is built by the way of thinking, and curiosity so that it becomes a culture.

Wagner, Spratt and Gal (1989) explain that the better literacy skills in school-aged children, it gives a positive impact on metacognitive knowledge. Metacognitive knowledge is general knowledge about cognition and awareness also about knowledge about one's cognition. Metacognitive has several aspects of knowledge, including strategic knowledge, contextual and conditional knowledge, and self-knowledge (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2010). In line with this understanding, Ummah (2017) describes the relevance of the "*Iqra*" command in the first revelation to modern society, the application of the research results theoretically shows that reading activities can be done in various fields of science, and under various conditions of life. This shows that the first revelation revealed by Allah SWT has commanded us to develop and improve our literacy skills so that the knowledge and insight of Muslims remain to develop.

Based on relevant research studies, Hapsari, et al (2017) describes the improvement of early literacy abilities of preschoolers through stimulation programs. Hapsari explained that the stimulation program is a treatment by providing a literacy package containing an activity manual and a set of literacy media for children and socialization for mothers. The result of this study shows that there are differences in the increase of early literacy ability in the experimental group with the control group. Qualitative analysis shows there is an increase in literacy ability by observing changes in measurement results.

Asyhari (2017) conveys his ideas about scientific literacy based on Islamic values and Indonesian culture. He explained that the idea of scientific literacy based on Islamic values and Indonesian culture still requires an in-depth study, both through discussions, seminars, and applications to be more applicable, that could be developed as its assessment tools, and hopes that it could become a concept in the theme of integration science and Islam.

Meanwhile, Kharizmi (2015) describes the difficulties of elementary school students in improving literacy skills, including the unsuitable literacy practices undertaken by teachers and parents, the lack of available literacy environments, and the different levels of literacy of parents also have an impact on the lack of information literacy students get from home. Therefore, by facilitating good literacy practices and an adequate literacy environment, it is likely that literate generations will be born in beloved Indonesia.

Several steps can be taken to improve student literacy based on the results of Mackh's (2003) research, that is teacher-directed reading instructions, choosing their reading books, word skill instructions, and writing. Meanwhile, Biancarosa et al. (2010) said that six literacy activities can be done for children from kindergarten to 2nd grade elementary school, that is interactive reading, shared reading, guided reading, interactive writing, writing workshops, and word learning.

Indonesia is a country where the majority of the population is Muslim, so the literacy skills improvement program that is implemented should have an Islamic element that can be developed. Unfortunately, there have not been many studies on improving literacy skills based on Islamic education. Some of the previous studies that have been presented above also are not able yet to represent the importance of Islamic education in improving literacy skills and opening up society's paradigms about education. Therefore, fostering village youth organizations through an Islamic Reading Center as an effort to improve literacy skills in children is one of the Islamic value-based educational programs needed by the society in villages.

The method used in this research is the accompaniment method in the form of PAR (Participatory Action Research) works. PAR involves active participation from all parties / stakeholders in making better changes. It should be understood that PAR has three interrelated things namely participation,

research and action (Afandi, et al, 2015). The work steps in this program are adapted from the way PAR works, including: initial mapping, building participatory relationships, developing strategic plans, organizing, building community learning centers, making movements / action changes, and expanding the scale of movements and support. In detail the operational steps of this method are described as follows:

Initial Mapping

Initial mapping is the first step taken to determine the initial conditions of the location and the subject of service so that it will better understand the reality of the existing problems. This initial mapping in community service is a form of needs analysis/ needs assessment. The results of the needs analysis in this service activity are in the form of preliminary data on the number of elementary schools in Mojo village and the number of students, the number of students who cannot read/read difficulties, and it is known that there are no facilities related to literacy both in the village and in the school environment. In addition, it is also known that there is an official village-level organization in the form of a village youth organization that has a decree, an organizational structure and a structured organizational level. The results of the needs analysis are then used as the basis for determining participatory relationships in the next step.

Building Participatory Relationships

The participatory relationship is the second step carried out as a follow-up to the previous needs analysis. This step aims to establish cooperation and build trust with the community so that a synergistic and mutually supportive relationship is established. At this stage, participatory relationships were carried out with a youth organization of Mojo village, a youth organization of

Cluwak sub-district, a youth organization of Pati regency, Mojo village government, PKH assistants in Cluwak, the social agency of Pati regency, the education and culture agency of Pati, the regional library of Pati Regency (Arpusda) and national library. In the early stages, of course, the main participatory relationship is with the youth organizations of Mojo village who will manage the IRC once it is formed.

Developing Strategic Plans and Organizing

The strategic planning and organization were carried out together with the Mojo village youth committee in the initial coordination meeting for the formation of the IRC. The initial coordination meeting which was held on 27 July 2019 at the Ki Ageng Mojo youth organization secretariat attended by 10 members and the head of the Mojo village youth organization. The meeting discussed plans for the establishment of the IRC, starting with the procurement of reading books, procurement of bookshelves, reading desks and other equipment related to the establishment of the IRC as well as the establishment of a temporary management structure for the IRC. In addition, it was also conveyed about the implementation plan of coaching for youth groups related to efforts to foster children's interest in reading and library management. The last discussion is about literacy activities that will be carried out by IRC. All meeting participants were very enthusiastic about the establishment of IRC, coaching activities and literacy activities that will be carried out.

Building Community Learning Centers

The construction of a community learning center here is the establishment of an Islamic Reading Center (IRC) which is a center for providing various Islamic books and reading media that can be managed by village youth organizations, an Islamic reading center will be able to improve the literacy skills of children

in rural areas who still need a lot of attention in education. In its development, the Islamic Reading Center (IRC) has a specific name by considering various aspects of the Mojo village community so that it is more embedded in people's memories, so it is named the Ki Ageng Mojo Library. The name Ki Ageng Mojo itself is taken from the cleric figure who spread Islam in the village. So that the Islamic Reading Center (IRC) in the village community is better known as the Ki Ageng Mojo Library, not only a provider of educational reading books for children but also a center for literacy activities in the Mojo village environment.

Making Movements / Action Changes

Movements/ change actions carried out in the form of literacy activities carried out by IRC "Ki Ageng Mojo Library" include borrowing reading books for children, joint reading movements integrated into mobile libraries and reading and writing training for children, especially for school-age children who still have difficulty reading.

Expanding The Scale of Movements and Support

The last step is to expand the scale of the movement and support, in this step IRC "Library Ki Ageng Mojo" expands mobile library activities in TPQ and other schools outside Mojo village. In addition, we also submitted a proposal for the procurement of books to the National Library of Indonesia to increase the existing treasury of books in IRC.

B. DISCUSSION

The fostering of village youth organizations through the Islamic Reading Center (IRC) which aims to increase children's literacy is a literacy collaborative (LC) program starting from the rural village level, local government and the central government. In the planning, formation and implementation, IRC involved

the youth organization of Mojo village, a youth organization of Cluwak sub-district, a youth organization of Pati regency, the education and culture agency of Pati, the social agency of Pati regency, the regional library of Pati Regency (Arpusda) and national library, also the directorate general of Islamic education of religious ministry of the Republic of Indonesia. This program is a form of dedication to society that is integrated nationally based on the analysis of data needs in Mojo village, Cluwak Sub-District, Pati Regency.

Geographically, Mojo village is the northernmost village in Pati Regency which is bordered by Jepara Regency. The targets of this program are school-age children in Mojo village who need facilities and infrastructure in education in the form of an Islamic Reading Center that provides educational books for school-age children so it can improve children's reading interests.

The description of the initial condition based on the results of a preliminary survey shows that the youth organization of Mojo village has pioneered a program by creating a place called the "Rumah Kreatif Ki Ageng Mojo" in which there are activities for young people developing their talents and creativity. Unfortunately, there is no place for children to improve their interest in reading as an effort to develop their literacy skills and view, whereas creativity without sufficient view could be an obstacle or problem. The existence of IRC, "Rumah Kreatif Ki Ageng Mojo" can be more developed, its activities are not only activities for developing the talent of children and adolescents, but also there are activities to improve children's literacy skills. Islamic Reading Center has various interesting educational books for school-age children, so that children are motivated to read.

Regarding the results of the preliminary survey, there are 4 elementary schools with not too many students in Mojo village. Based on data from the Department of Education and Culture of Pati Regency, the number of elementary school students in Mojo Village can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Number of Elementary School Students in Mojo Village

No.	School Names	Number of Students
1.	SD Negeri 1 Mojo	64
2.	SD Negeri 2 Mojo	52
3.	SD Negeri 3 Mojo	37
4.	SD Negeri 4 Mojo	41
Total		194

In addition, it is important to know that elementary schools in Mojo village do not have a school library. Of course, this is very alarming, because schools as a place to study should be supported with facilities and infrastructure to support learning activities including access to obtain information from reading books and lessons. Especially for lower grade students should get special attention in terms of literacy, since in 1st, 2nd, and even 3rd grade cannot read yet or still have difficulty reading, it will not only affect their cognitive development but also their social development. Therefore, we need a literacy improvement program with effective activity steps to overcome these problems.

The activities carried out in the collaborative literacy program are based on how PAR works, including participation, action and research. The activities carried out are:

1. Developing IRC

The background of Islamic Reading Center (IRC) development is the existence of initial study by observational research as a form of need assessment or initial mapping conducted in Mojo village, Cluwak sub-district, Pati. Based on the result of the need assessment, it is known that the primary school in Mojo village does not yet have the facilities and infrastructure in the form

of a school library. This is supported by the data that there are still many lower grade students who have difficulty in reading, which is 42% of the number of lower grade students. There are even 11% of high-class students who cannot read fluently. This condition that underlying the development of IRC in Mojo village. Below are data on students who cannot read yet / have difficulty in reading and writing in Mojo village in the form of a diagram in Figure 1.

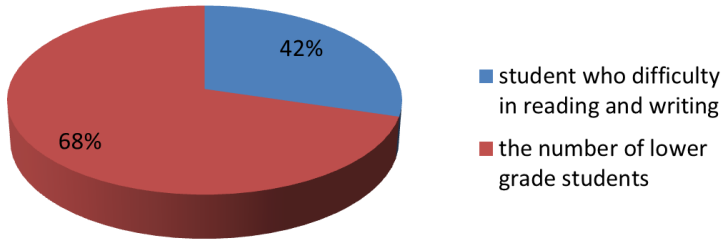


Figure 1. Data on the percentage of students who cannot read yet / have difficulty in reading and writing in Mojo village

While the data on the percentage of children who cannot read yet / have difficulty in reading and writing in Mojo village based on grade level is presented in the form of a diagram in Figure 2.

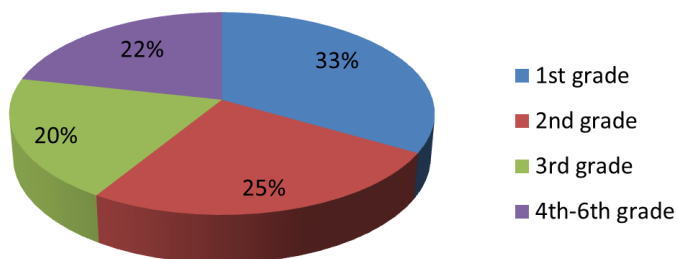


Figure 2. Data on the percentage of children who cannot read yet / have difficulty in reading and writing in Mojo village based on grade level

Furthermore, based on these data, we developed a participatory relationship with the youth organization of the Mojo village and continued with the youth organizations of the Cluwak sub-district and the youth organizations of Pati Regency. Then we arranged a strategic plan including planning for the procurement of facilities and infrastructure for IRC, fostering activities planning for youth organizations, followed by organizing the youth organization to manage IRC, and lastly, building IRC as a learning and reading center for children located in “Rumah Kreatif Ki Ageng Mojo”

2. Fostering from the assistants of Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) of the Social Agency

The participatory relationships are also conducted by the social agency, especially PKH assistants in Cluwak sub-district, in this case, related to data analysis of children from underprivileged families. In addition, fostering activities were also carried out in the form of FGD with speakers from local PKH assistants. This is done since from the results of data analysis it is known

that the majority of children who cannot read yet or are difficult to reading come from underprivileged families.

3. Fostering from the Regional Library (Arpusda) of Pati Regency

Fostering on village youth organizations conducted by Arpusda is an FGD activity in which there is a provision of materials related to the management of libraries or “Rumah Baca” that are good and sustainable. This activity was carried out so that the IRC manager, namely the members of the village youth organization have the same knowledge and understanding of IRC management so that in its implementation there was no misperception due to lack of knowledge of library or “Rumah Baca”. In addition, with a good understanding of library management, it is expected that IRC will be able to carry out literacy activities that are sustainable and beneficial.

4. Mobile library

Mobile library activity is a movement / action that we do as an effort to improve children’s literacy skills. The mobile library was initially conducted at elementary schools in the village of Mojo, bearing in mind that the schools there do not yet have literacy facilities and infrastructure. So that these change activities or actions are right on target and beneficial to the school. The students seemed very enthusiastic about this mobile library, because this activity was their first time in their school, especially with the number of interesting reading books that made students motivated to read books. Next, we expanded the scale of the movement by conducting a mobile library in TPQ and other schools outside the Mojo village.

5. Literacy training for children

Literacy training activity for children is also an act of change that we do. This activity takes place at Rumah Kreatif Ki Ageng Mojo and cooperates with LPM of Mojo village to teach children who cannot read yet or have difficulty in reading and writing to become proficient in reading and motivated in learning. In addition, as an effort to develop support for IRC, we also submit a book procurement proposal to the national library to add the book collection at IRC.

Our dedication to the society focuses on improving children's literacy by fostering village youth organizations as an official organization at the village level. As a fact that child is the next generation of the nation which will be a benchmark for the progress and development of a nation. In addition, many studies from the biological side state that the development of abilities, skills and potential is better to start in early childhood. According to Ernawulan (2003) the category of children that is included in early childhood is children at the age of 0 (zero) to 8 (eight) years. At this age, children are in the process of developing both cognitive, language, social and emotional from simple to more complex. If we see from the level of education in Indonesia, those included in the category of early childhood are children who are in lower grades of elementary school age (1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade), kindergarten, playgroup and infancy.

It is important to know that in early childhood the formation of synapses in the brain undergoes a very significant development. According to some research data, children aged 3 to 8 years have 1 million more synapses than those adults. Meanwhile, entering adolescence and adulthood will lose half of the synapses that are owned as a baby. Thompson and Nelson (2001) explain that each part of the brain structure has a different

peak production point for synapses. The advantages of synaptic formation are followed by pruning of the synapses that are not used. This process is called synaptogenesis. Synaptogenesis occurs at the age of 3 months before birth until the age of 16 years after birth.

Furthermore, Tierney and Nelson (2009) explain that the prefrontal cortex part which is a part that is involved in the visual and auditory processes, pruning synapses occur between the 4th and 6th years of life. Meanwhile, pruning to the part involved in higher cognitive functions such as inhibition control and emotion regulation continues into adolescence. The formation and reduction process of synapses is an important process in a child's cognitive development. Therefore, the environment is very influential on the development of a child in the form of providing stimulus. Children need to get a good stimulus especially related to literacy. Giving literacy stimuli such as reading and writing training, motivation to read an introduction of various interesting and educative reading sources has a very positive influence on the development of children in elementary school age, especially in the lower grades level.

Another thing needs to be concerned is that providing stimulus to children must be done in a cheerful and happy atmosphere. A happy atmosphere will stimulate endorphin secretion from the brain glands that will activate acetylcholine in synapses. The activity of Acetylcholine makes the memory stored better, so it can be concluded that a happy atmosphere will make the brain do the process of memory storage and retrieval of information better (Menkes RI, 2016). Therefore, at the mobile library and literacy training, ice breaking is also held to make children feel happy and not easily bored.

Another study suggests that literacy may be a central intervening variable in mothers, this could be a causal link between education and better health and survival for children. A mother is very influential on the good cognitive development

of their children (Levine et al., 2012). The same thing was conveyed by Sandiford et al. (1995), who explained that studies from various developing countries have shown that literacy and maternal education are closely related to the health and survival of children. She also points out that education has contributed more to reducing mortality than the provision of health services.

C. CONCLUSION

The fostering of village youth organizations through an Islamic Reading Center (IRC) that aims to improve children's literacy is a literacy collaborative (LC) program. The program begins with a needs assessment of rural villages' society or schools that do not yet have literacy facilities and infrastructure. In its implementation, this program requires the participation and support of all parties starting from the village, sub-district, and regency to the national level. Furthermore, it was done a changes movement or action were also carried out in the form of mobile library and literacy training for children. The existence of research, participation and action makes IRC managed by youth organizations able to carry out literacy activities that are sustainable and beneficial to society, especially in improving children's literacy.

Several factors that influence children's literacy that is the formation of synapses in the brain, the environment and the mother's education. The formation and reduction process of synapses is an important process in a child's cognitive development. Then, the environment is very influential on the development of a child in the form of providing stimulus. Children need to get a good stimulus especially related to literacy. The first stimulus from the mother is very influential on the good cognitive development of their children. Therefore, education is very important for a woman who will later become a mother, she not only raises children but also educates with good knowledge.

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