



Implementation of the Literacy Journal Program in Strengthening Students' Reading Interest

Teguh Wibowo¹, Mahariah²

UIN Sumatera Utara Medan, Indonesia^{1,2}

teguh0301223131@uinsu.ac.id¹, mahariah@uinsu.ac.id²

Abstract: This study aims to analyse the implementation of the Literacy Journal programme in strengthening students' reading interest at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan. This research employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. The data sources consisted of the principal, vice principal, and students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, while data validity was ensured through triangulation techniques. The findings reveal that the Literacy Journal programme was designed as a routine literacy habituation activity requiring students to read books daily and record the results of their reading in a literacy journal. The programme is supported by weekly literacy activities known as Kamis Literasi, where students present and reflect on the books they have read. The study shows that the programme contributes positively to strengthening students' reading interest, improving communication skills, expanding vocabulary mastery, and fostering critical thinking abilities. In addition, the integration of English writing within the literacy journal reflects efforts to develop global literacy competencies among students. However, several challenges were identified, including limited library facilities, students' dishonesty in filling out journals, and insufficient parental involvement. Therefore, collaboration between schools and families is essential to support the sustainability and effectiveness of literacy programs in developing students' reading culture and educational quality.

Keywords: Literacy Journal, Reading Interest, School Literacy Program, Critical Thinking, Islamic Education

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi program Literacy Journal dalam memperkuat minat baca siswa di SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Sumber data terdiri dari kepala sekolah, wakil kepala sekolah, dan siswa. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, sedangkan keabsahan data diuji menggunakan triangulasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program Literacy Journal dirancang sebagai kegiatan pembiasaan literasi yang mewajibkan siswa membaca buku setiap hari dan menuliskan hasil bacaannya dalam jurnal literasi. Program ini didukung oleh kegiatan mingguan Kamis Literasi yang memberi kesempatan kepada siswa untuk mempresentasikan dan merefleksikan bacaan mereka. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program tersebut memberikan kontribusi positif dalam memperkuat minat baca siswa, meningkatkan kemampuan komunikasi, memperluas penguasaan kosakata, serta melatih kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa. Selain itu, integrasi penulisan bahasa Inggris dalam jurnal literasi menunjukkan upaya sekolah dalam mengembangkan kompetensi literasi global siswa. Namun, penelitian juga menemukan beberapa kendala, seperti keterbatasan fasilitas perpustakaan, ketidakjujuran siswa dalam pengisian jurnal, dan

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kurangnya keterlibatan orang tua. Oleh karena itu, kolaborasi antara sekolah dan keluarga sangat diperlukan untuk mendukung keberlanjutan program literasi dalam membangun budaya membaca dan meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan siswa.

Kata Kunci: Literacy Journal, Minat Baca, Program Literasi Sekolah, Berpikir Kritis, Pendidikan Islam

Corresponding Author:

Teguh Wibowo

UIN Sumatera Utara Medan, Indonesia, teguh0301223131@uinsu.ac.id

Introduction

Literacy is a key to developing quality human resources with global competitiveness (Miftah & Prasetyo, 2024). A person's ability to read, understand, and apply information critically and analytically is a prerequisite for optimal participation and contribution in a dynamic modern society (Anwas et al., 2022). One of the essential basic literacies to be mastered is reading and writing. Reading and writing are functional literacies that have their own urgency for each individual in living a good life (Tim GLN Kemendikbud, 2017). Unfortunately, in Indonesia, literacy does not seem to be considered a crucial aspect. This can be seen in the literacy activities of the community, especially among school students.

PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) data for 2022 shows that Indonesia's reading literacy score is 359, down from 371 in 2018 and the lowest score since 2000. Indonesia ranks 63rd out of 81 countries. The score of 359 points for reading literacy is far below the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) average of 476. Indonesia ranks 6th among ASEAN countries, lower than Singapore, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and Thailand (OECD, 2023). The 2019 National Reading Literacy Activity Index (Aktivitas Literasi Baca/ Alibaca) showed low literacy activity (index number 37.32). North Sumatra Province itself ranked 18th with a low Alibaca index of only 35.73, even below the average of the National Alibaca index, which is known to be at a low literacy activity level (Solihin, 2019). This indicates that North Sumatra province has an index that can be said to be quite concerning in terms of reading interest.

SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa as one of the junior high schools in Medan, North Sumatra, certainly faces challenges related to the low reading interest of some of its students. In response, the school has a special focus on its students' literacy. This is evidenced by the implementation of the Literacy Journal program, which has been running for several years, with the aim of fostering and strengthening reading interest in every student. This is because the school recognizes that a strong interest in reading is something that is expected and needed by all individuals, including students themselves, teachers, parents, and others.

As an educational institution based on Islamic values, SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa recognizes that in Islamic teachings, reading is an urgent matter and

is considered the first revelation. This command is explicitly stated in the Quran, Surah Al-'Alaq: 1-5:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝١ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۝٢ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ۝٣

Meaning: "Read with (mentioning) the name of your Lord who created (1). He has created man from a clot of blood (2). Read, and your Lord is the Most Glorious (3)" (Qur'an Kemenag, 2022).

Az-Zuhaili in Tafsir Al-Munir explains that this verse is a command to read while starting by saying the name of your God or asking for help in the name of your God who created everything. The word *iqra'* (read) is repeated twice as *ta'kid* (reinforcement). This shows how important reading is in all contexts (Az-Zuhaili, 2013). In line with this, Imam Jalalain in Tafsir Jalalain also explains the command to read, which begins with the pronunciation of *basmallah*, which is then reaffirmed by repeating the command to read in the third verse (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuti, 2012).

The command to read is explicitly stated in the surah because, essentially, reading can open up various sources of knowledge. This is where the importance of cultivating reading interest in students lies. Students who have a good interest in reading will find it easier to acquire knowledge, because reading a lot will help students find the meaning contained in the words in the text they read. This study aims to observe how the implementation of the Literacy Journal program at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlâs Taqwa Medan strengthens students' reading interest. Researchers want to observe how the Literacy Journal program is implemented and what students' impressions of the program. It is hoped that this study can offer a solution that can be applied to strengthen students' reading interest in Indonesia in the future, considering that reading interest is a crucial factor in improving the quality of education and developing student literacy.

Methods

This research was conducted using a qualitative research method, where the results are more concerned with the interpretation of data found in the field. Qualitative research methods are often called naturalistic research methods because the research is conducted in natural conditions (natural settings). The research is conducted on natural objects that develop as they are, not manipulated by the researcher, and the researcher's presence does not affect the dynamics of the object (Sugiyono, 2013). With research that only focuses on observing the implementation process of one of the school programs, the qualitative method is very appropriate for the researcher to use.

The case study approach is used in the sense that the research is focused on only one selected phenomenon and aims to be understood in depth, by ignoring other phenomena (Widodo, 2021). where the phenomenon that is the focus of the research is the Literacy Journal program implemented for students. The location of

the research is SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa, which is located at Medan Area Selatan Street, Famili Alley, No. 10, Medan Area District, Medan, North Sumatra (20216). The main reason for choosing the research location is that this school has a special program to support the literacy aspect of its students, especially in the aspect of reading interest. The program is called the Literacy Journal with a diary that must be filled in by students. The research period starts from February 12, 2026, to April 11, 2026. The data sources in this study consist of the principal, vice principal, and three students.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. These three data collection techniques were carried out by observing, asking, or examining, this data collection is usually carried out near the local environment for a certain period of time (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Triangulation of data collection methods and data sources was used as a data validity technique in this study, by collecting and testing the credibility of data obtained from the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. The main goal was to increase the researcher's understanding of what had been found (Sugiyono, 2013). Observations were carried out to see directly how the Literacy Journal program was implemented at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa. And then interviews were conducted with several related informants to dig deeper into the data and information. The informants were the principal as the leader of SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa, the vice principal as the coordinator and person in charge of the program, and three students whose reading interests had not yet developed well. The students came from grades VII, VIII, and IX, respectively, and underwent the literacy journal program itself.

Data is collected in three stages, namely data reduction, which refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming data that appears in written field notes or transcriptions. Then, data display, which is a collection of organized and compressed information that allows for drawing conclusions and taking action, and finally, the stage of drawing conclusions and verifying, supported by several related sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results And Discussion

Result

The fact that Indonesian society is still in the low literacy category, especially in the aspect of reading interest, certainly requires concrete steps to be able to improve and enhance its quality. For this reason, SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan designed a program with a specific target of increasing the reading interest of its students. This program is only in its third year of implementation, initiated directly by the vice principal, who is quite critical in improving literacy. Mr. JRE, who is the vice principal of SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan and the founder of a community-based organization that focuses on literacy, education, and social in the city of Medan called Ruang Literasi Sumatra Utara, has the enthusiasm for

improving the culture of literacy which is not only limited to the community he built, but he also wants to cultivate that culture of literacy from an early age, so this Literacy Journal program was designed to increase the passion for literacy of his students. The background related to the design of this program was conveyed in an interview conducted with him as informant I:

First, let's look at the phenomenon that our literacy rate in Indonesia is currently low. This is true for both students and pupils. So, we're starting to take steps towards this among students... Second, let's look at the general background. Second, we see that literacy should be a key element in every learning process (IF-WKS1, March 2, 2026).

The low literacy rate, particularly in terms of reading interest, among students at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa in Medan is a major concern behind the program's inception. Survey results and field observations have shown that students' reading interest remains relatively low. Furthermore, literacy is a crucial aspect that must be nurtured in each individual to develop critical thinking skills, thus facilitating their learning at school. These two reasons are driving factors for the school to design effective activities that can strengthen students' reading interest.

Researchers also found that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, with its student-centered concept, was deemed to have prevented students from relying too much on textbooks as a guide for their home learning. Furthermore, teachers sometimes found it difficult to create a conducive learning environment for students at home, given that homework was not permitted. This lack of homework automatically opened up a significant opportunity for students to skip reading altogether, even holding books at home. Therefore, the Literacy Journal program for students at home attempted to prevent this opportunity. This was regardless of whether they were reading formal textbooks or informal books outside of class. The primary goal was to spark student interest first, as improving students' reading ability would not be achieved until they developed an interest in reading. To achieve this, a platform that could facilitate the implementation of the plan was needed. One such platform was the daily literacy journal program, which aimed to encourage students to consistently read books.

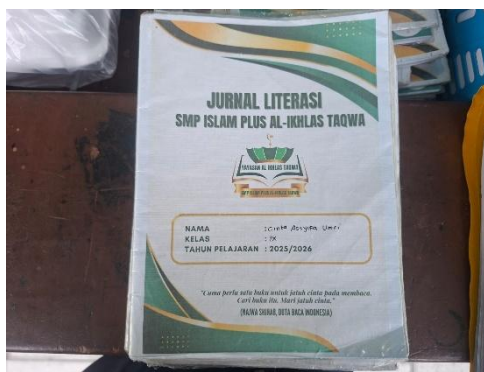
The program was initially implemented at the initiative of teachers at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa. Initially, there were no dedicated diaries or journals, only standard notebooks. Due to several challenges, such as irregular writing and inconsistencies in the notebooks, the school decided to print a special journal for this literacy journal program:

We asked them if they had read the book. To provide visible evidence, we tried to compile a literacy book (IF-KS2, March 4, 2026).

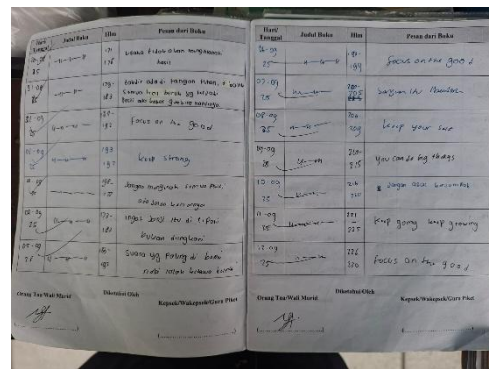
This literacy journal is provided by the school and is obtained by students from the beginning of their entry into the school, where this journal is obtained along

with two other books that must be filled out regularly: a prayer monitoring book and a *tahfidz* book. So from the beginning, students have been provided with three books that must be filled out with their routine activities that cover aspects of literacy and religious worship. The results of the study found that the technique of filling out the journal begins with students being given freedom regarding what books they want to read, where they are required to read the book every day, without any benchmark for the number of pages. Then students are asked to fill in the columns provided in the journal containing the number, title of the book, author, page number of the book read, and the message or lesson learned from the reading source. Students fill out their daily literacy journals at home with the readings they have read. After that, they are required to ask for signatures from their parents or guardians as verification and approval of the readings they have. And the final step is the collection of literacy journals once a week to be checked and verified for accuracy by the teacher on duty.

In response to the strong currents of globalization that are widespread and easily accessible today, schools have implemented a new policy regarding literacy journals, requiring students to translate important messages they learn from reading into English, rather than simply writing them down. Observations of students' literacy journals revealed that the messages they learn from reading are now written in English. The journals also show a transition from Indonesian to English.



Picture 1. Cover of Literacy Journal



Picture 2. Contents of Literacy Journal

In addition to writing it directly into the journal, this program is also accompanied by the Thursday Literacy program (*Kamis Literasi*), which is held once a week. On this Thursday, their daily journals are collected to be checked one by one regarding what they read each day and what they got from the reading for seven days or a full week. This Thursday literacy activity is carried out every Thursday morning at around 7:20 WIB after reading the *Asmaul Husna*. After the silent reading activity, several students are asked to come forward and explain about the sources of the reading books they have read during the week, while the previous 15 minutes are time to review what they have read. For participants who are unable to explain

the results of their reading, the contents of the literacy journal they have written can be suspected of their honesty. Therefore, this activity is considered a verification stage of the daily journals that have been written by students.

Observations revealed that some students had developed fairly good communication skills in conveying the message from their reading materials. Although some still seemed to stutter in their delivery, this activity of delivering messages in front of other students can be quite effective practice to improve students' communication skills in public speaking. During the research, the Thursday Literacy activity was temporarily canceled due to certain activities such as exams, Ramadan activities, and several other programs. However, the Literacy Journal program continued. Students were still required to fill out their daily journals even without the Thursday Literacy activity. This is because the school hopes that reading will become a routine activity that cannot be separated from each of them.

The implementation of the Literacy Journal program, which has been running for more than two years, has seen several changes and positive impacts on students' reading interests. The principal stated that students can demonstrate their reading skills, as he explained:

Alhamdulillah the children were really able to answer what they wrote. Yes, that's what they understand, right? At least they really read about the topic they read, they already know... (IF-KS2, March 4 2026).

This program appears to be starting to spark an interest in reading among the school's students. This is evidenced by several students who were able to complete several fairly thick books in a relatively short time for their age, such as a novel by author Tere Liye in one month. Research shows that students generally prefer novels, picture books, or comics as their reading material. This is undoubtedly because junior high school students are more interested in reading material that stimulates their imagination.

Based on observation findings, the main obstacle that comes from the internal side of the school in implementing the Literacy Journal program at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan is that the school's support is not fully optimal because it does not have an adequate school library. Researchers found that the school already has several collections of books stored in the vice principal's room, and students are allowed to borrow them. Here, it is also seen that some students borrow books, evidenced by the existing book borrowing records. In response to the lack of library facilities, the school provides an alternative for students by scheduling a visit to the North Sumatra regional library located at Jalan Brigjen Katamso No. 45 K Sei Mati, AUR, Medan Maimun District, not too far from the school location.

The next challenge comes from the external sides, namely that some students are still found to be filling out their journals dishonestly. This incident can occur due

to a lack of contribution from students' parents. Therefore, reading interest should be formed starting from the family environment. However, this is also related to the next challenge, namely that parents are sometimes found not to fully contribute to the implementation of this literacy journal program. Of the three students interviewed, all three stated that their parents only sign their respective literacy journals without asking questions to verify their children's reading results. This is certainly very unfortunate, considering that this activity is quite an opportunity to encourage students to strengthen their reading interest.

Discussion

School Views on Student Reading Literacy

Research conducted at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan found that the Literacy Journal program was designed not only as a form of concern about the still relatively low reading interest of Indonesian students, but also the visible reality that many students still have limited insight, where the urgency of literacy is not only pegged to specific lessons, but it is needed in all subjects and every teaching and learning activity, because literacy encompasses all aspects of education itself. This was also conveyed by Anwas, where literacy is very important in successfully pursuing education and acquiring various other life skills. The goal of literacy is not only the ability to read, write, and count, but also to direct students to have a love of reading, writing, and counting themselves (Anwas et al., 2022). The school implemented this program to instill a love and even a need for reading in students.

The school believes that the positive value of reading activities does not only come from formal textbooks that are the subject of their classes. Any type of book appropriate to the reader's age can make a positive contribution and contribute new vocabulary for readers; even comics can sharpen a student's imagination and thinking skills. Therefore, the school does not use formal textbooks as a benchmark for reading material that must be read by students, who then write in their respective daily journals (Gaskins, 2005; Oakes & Saunders, 2004). In line with Nurhalizar's statement, which explains that reading is the key to learning all knowledge, including information and daily instructions that have a significant impact on life. Reading and writing are positively correlated with language skills and vocabulary mastery. Input of words and ideas is obtained through reading, while the output is channeled through writing. Someone accustomed to reading and writing can find the right words or terms to express something. Such abilities are what make communication work well (Nurhalizar et al., 2023).

Miller, in his book, explains the urgency of reading interest that reading must be done to become literate, but it does not guarantee a literate life. The term aliterate refers to those who can read but choose not to. The life of an illiterate person is not much different from the life of an illiterate person; people who do not read have no advantages over those who can read (Miller, 2016). The school's understanding is

directly proportional to Miller's statement that being able to read alone is not enough. The students of SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlash Taqwa have all been able to read, but not all of them have a good interest in reading. Therefore, teachers not only want their students to be able to read but also need to read.

Literacy learning, which includes reading and writing, fundamentally requires students to gather, process, and present information. Therefore, increasing the number of reading materials outside of textbooks is considered crucial for honing students' thinking patterns and reasoning. Aziz explained that books, as a medium of knowledge and information, play a crucial and strategic role in addressing various problems. Everyone will have access to a wide range of insights and knowledge, which will shape critical thinking patterns and enhance their literacy and intellectual capacity (Aziz et al., 2024). Students are expected to read as many books as possible according to their interests. A well-developed interest in reading will foster strong reading skills, so that students view books as friends, not just reading materials.

Daily Literacy Journal as a Routine School Program

The Literacy Journal implemented at SMP Al-Ikhlash Taqwa is a daily journal that must be written by each student with the results of their daily reading. Khoir explains that a daily journal, or what is often called a diary, is a short, regular text, reflecting the activities carried out, what is thought, and the feelings of the writer. Usually begins with a date. Allows someone to write a diary regularly, or less regularly throughout life or only at certain times (Khoir, 2016). This Literacy Journal program is designed to be a routine activity for students so that the school can ensure that their students have a positive daily routine agenda, and they have to do it. In this case, the school chose to make reading a routine activity that must also be proven by the results of the students' reading through their daily journal entries.

Numerous studies across various disciplines have shown that journaling allows individuals to be creative and inquisitive, thus helping them to be critical and reflective about their learning. Therefore, reflective journaling benefits both students and teachers because it can positively impact students' educational experiences in the following ways:

1. Journal writing encourages students to reflect on and articulate their thoughts and problem-solving strategies.
2. Help students to better identify and analyze their difficulties
3. The journal supports the effective acquisition and transferability of cognitive and metacognitive skills across disciplines (Essa, 2024).

Daily journal writing is done with the hope that students can train their thinking skills through writing, so that it helps them to stay active and able to think creatively (Essa, 2024). The Literacy journal program implemented at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlash Taqwa is expected to train students' thinking skills and keep students

active in learning at home, responding to the *student center* policy that does not allow teachers to give homework to students. The Literacy Journal program plays a role as a controller for students in their literacy activities at home. This can be seen when the Thursday Literacy activity is canceled due to a certain program, the Literacy Journal must still be filled out by students to prove their activity in literacy.

Implications of the Literacy Journal Program

The Literacy Journal program aims to improve the literacy of all students, starting with at least instilling an interest in reading, which is crucial for the educational journey of every school student. This is considering that an interest in reading is not something that someone simply has, but an interest that grows and is developed through the influence of external experiences. An interest in reading is a strong and deep attention accompanied by a feeling of pleasure in reading activities that can lead someone to read of their own volition or external encouragement. In addition, this interest in reading grows because of the thought that reading activities will benefit them (Mardiah, 2024). Researchers found positive results that have been successfully instilled by this Literacy Journal program with the consistency of several students in their reading activities. Several students have completed their book reading in the past month. This shows that an interest in reading has been successfully instilled in some students, and of course, must be strengthened to create permanent consistency.

One of the characteristics of an individual's interest in reading is a feeling of pleasure or enjoyment in reading (Stebbins, 2012). This reading activity is not carried out because of external demands, but because the individual enjoys the process of reading itself and does it consciously with pleasure. This is what the school wants to bring out and strengthen through the Literacy Journal program. The school hopes that when they are no longer obliged to fill out a daily literacy journal, they will still have the desire to read books according to their interests. As explained by Rahayu in her research, reading interest encourages individuals to read of their own volition, a situation that is different from someone who might read because it is required by an external party. Reading interest has quite significant implications in the world of education. A student with a strong interest in reading will tend to achieve higher achievement, this is due to broader insight and knowledge, more developed imagination and creativity, and patterns of critical thinking (Rahayu et al., 2023).

The new policy implemented by schools regarding filling out Literacy Journals is also not without reason. Students are required to write messages from their reading in English. This is because English, as an international language, is certainly crucial for every individual living in today's world. Therefore, this program expands its focus not only on strengthening reading and writing literacy but also on language literacy, which is part of global literacy. Mansyur stated that a nation with a culture of literacy and high intelligence demonstrates the nation's

ability to collaborate, think critically, creatively, and communicate effectively, thus enabling it to win global competition (Mansyur, 2019).

The school feels that adding reading books outside of the lesson package is very necessary, not only to broaden horizons or deepen knowledge, but also to shape and hone students' critical reasoning. As explained by Irdawati, reading books not only provides various information, knowledge, and new experiences for students to gain, but diverse reading sources also enable students to improve their critical thinking skills, which ultimately makes their views sharper and their insights broader (Irdawati et al., 2017). A good interest in reading in students will more or less help students in developing their reading skills, such as understanding texts, increasing vocabulary, and honing their critical thinking patterns.

The concept of critical thinking in Islamic teachings is reflected in terms such as *ulul albab*, *tabayyun*, *tafakkur*, and *tadabbur*. In QS. Ali Imran: 190-191 The concept of a person who thinks critically is called *ulul albab*, namely a person who always reflects on the creation of the universe in which he lives and makes it a reminder and basis for their thought process. As in QS. Az-Zumar: 18 states that individuals who have common sense are those who listen to various opinions and choose the best among them to then be followed, a principle that shows the value of critical thinking for Muslim individuals in Islam (Jamilah, 2025). SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan, as an Islamic-based school, wants its students to be able to become individuals who are able to think critically and consciously on the grounds of their creation as God's creatures.

Furthermore, the Thursday Literacy activity, which is a continuation of the Literacy Journal Program, is held every week on Thursdays. This activity is intended to reflect on the results of reading during the week. The activity begins with silent reading for 10-15 minutes to review the results of the students' reading from the previous week. In her research, Rahma stated that one strategy to strengthen literacy and increase students' interest in reading is to involve students in silent reading activities for 15-20 minutes every day, followed by a one-page reflection (Rahma et al., 2025). After the silent reading activity, students are trained to be brave to appear and speak in public. Several students are appointed to come forward to present the results of the reading they have read, this activity is also expected to train good communication aspects for students.

Challenges in Implementing the Literacy Journal Program

In its implementation, the Literacy Journal program at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan encountered several challenges that could hinder the effectiveness of the program, both internally and externally. Internally, the school lacked optimal support for the provision of a school library. This is certainly unfortunate because libraries can play a crucial role in fostering reading interest. Purwanto stated that a good and conducive library can provide healthy

entertainment to fill free time through creative and light reading activities, as well as broaden, deepen, and enrich students' learning experiences (Purwanto et al., 2024). In response to this shortage, the school then proposed an alternative by scheduling a visit to the North Sumatra regional library, located not too far from the school. Students also applied for library cards during their visits. However, the school is still working to establish a school library as soon as possible because it is a critical need. The presence of the library is believed to provide a significant opportunity for students to visit and read the books within.

The next challenge comes from some students who are still found to be dishonest in their journal entries. One reason for this may be a lack of parental involvement. The awareness of reading interest should actually be cultivated from an early age, and children should be motivated to continue developing as they grow older. In line with Khairuddin's statement, students with little or no interest in reading will not be able to force themselves to pick up a book and read for academic purposes, let alone for pleasure. Students who dislike reading from an early age will find it difficult to develop a reading habit as they grow older (Khairuddin, 2013).

Therefore, reading interest should be fostered starting from the family environment. However, this is also a current challenge, as parents are sometimes found to not fully contribute to the implementation of this literacy journal program. Kasiyun explained that efforts to increase public reading interest cannot be solely the responsibility of families, communities, or educational institutions. Family, community, and educational institutions all play a crucial role in increasing reading interest (Kasiyun, 2015). Therefore, if one aspect does not contribute, the ultimate goal of increasing reading interest will certainly face significant challenges.

The adoption of a reading culture should begin early and begin within the family environment. Furthermore, educational institutions also need to pay proper attention to this matter. Through education, each person undergoes a process of transferring values/virtues from one generation to the next. The growth of values of reading and writing originates from the institutions that implement them through education. A reading culture will become routine and necessary if only educational institutions instill these cultural values in their education (Purwanto et al., 2024). Therefore, this researcher provides input to schools to at least hold special meetings regarding the Literacy Journal program counseling, especially when implementing it in each student's home. Schools must work extra to convince parents so they can coordinate and contribute to improving their children's literacy. Collaboration between formal and informal educational institutions is essential in every aspect. In this context, parents are expected to play a role as supporters of the success of the Literacy Journal program initiated by the school. It is hoped that the contribution and cooperation between formal and informal educational institutions can help resolve literacy issues for students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the implementation of the Literacy Journal program at SMP Islam Plus Al-Ikhlas Taqwa Medan has proven to be an effective school strategy in strengthening students' reading interest through structured and continuous literacy habituation. The program not only encourages students to read regularly every day, but also develops their reflective thinking, communication skills, and critical reasoning through journal writing and weekly literacy presentations. Furthermore, the policy requiring students to write the messages from their readings in English demonstrates the integration of reading literacy, writing literacy, and global language literacy within a single educational program. These findings indicate that consistent literacy habituation can gradually foster a sustainable reading culture among students.

This study contributes significantly to the development of educational literacy practices, particularly within Islamic-based schools. The Literacy Journal program can serve as an alternative model of literacy habituation that is practical and applicable for junior high school students because it involves collaboration between schools, students, and parents. The study also reinforces the perspective that strengthening reading interest cannot rely solely on formal classroom instruction, but requires continuous literacy-oriented activities integrated into students' daily routines. In addition, this research enriches the discourse of Islamic educational literacy by integrating Islamic values into reading culture, particularly through the concept of *iqra'* as a foundational principle in cultivating students' literacy awareness and intellectual development.

Nevertheless, this study still has several limitations. The research was conducted in only one educational institution with a limited number of informants, which means the findings cannot yet be generalized to broader educational contexts with different characteristics. Moreover, the study mainly focused on the implementation process of the program and its role in strengthening students' reading interest, without quantitatively measuring its impact on academic achievement or overall literacy competence. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve a wider range of participants, apply mixed-method approaches, and examine the effectiveness of literacy programs in improving academic performance, critical thinking skills, and students' digital literacy more comprehensively.

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