

The contribution of reading comprehension skills and learning motivation to junior high school students' news writing skills

Dina Adila ^{a, 1}, Afnita ^{a, 2*}, Syahrul Ramadhan ^{a, 3}, Amril Amir ^{a, 4}

^a Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

¹ dinaadila1311@gmail.com; ² afnita@fbs.unp.ac.id; ³ syahrul_r@fbs.unp.ac.id; ⁴ amril.amir@fbs.unp.ac.id

* Correspondent author

Received: April 28, 2026

Revised: June 12, 2026

Accepted: June 29, 2026

KEYWORDS

Reading
Comprehension
Skills
Learning
Motivation
News Writing

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and measure the extent to which reading comprehension skills and learning motivation contribute to news writing skills. This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The study population consisted of 136 seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari, Jambi Province. A sample of 82 respondents was selected using proportionate random sampling. The data collection instruments consisted of an objective test to measure reading comprehension, a Likert scale questionnaire for learning motivation, and a performance test to assess news text writing skills. The data were statistically analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation test, partial and multiple linear regression, the t-test, and the F-test. The results of the analysis confirmed the following three points. First, reading comprehension skills significantly contribute to news text writing skills by 56.10%. Second, learning motivation contributes significantly by 40.45%. Third, reading comprehension skills and learning motivation simultaneously contribute 56.25% to news text writing skills. Based on these research results, it is concluded that mastery of text comprehension and the level of learning motivation are key predictors of the quality of students' news articles. Improving students' ability to produce functional texts requires schools to integrate analytical reading exercises with the cultivation of a supportive learning environment in the classroom.

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Introduction

Writing is one of the most fundamental language skills in modern communication (Karim, 2023). It requires organizing and processing information into a complete text (Aljuaid, 2024; Repelita et al., 2024). This text communicates precise ideas to readers (Ifnaldi et al., 2025). Given its crucial role in communication, writing skills have garnered significant attention from various international organizations. UNESCO (2024) emphasizes that the ability to critically analyze texts is essential for society to navigate today's information explosion. Because critical text analysis is essential to navigate today's information explosion, writing skills are recognized globally as a primary indicator of human resource quality (Erni et al., 2023; Siswanto et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2024). These impacts make the ability to produce written texts one of the primary indicators in assessing the quality of human resources globally (Susanti et al., 2025; Munawwaroh & Rokhmansyah, 2025). However, OECD report (2023) global literacy data reveals significant challenges, with many developing countries failing to meet minimum competency standards. Students often struggle to integrate their surface-level understanding into coherent writing, indicating a severe issue with functional literacy (Putrawangsa & Hasanah, 2022; Aidin & Ince, 2024). This international challenge is reflected in Indonesia's educational performance, where students' literacy scores in problem-solving

through writing have not shown significant improvement (Ayu et al., 2025). Indonesian students face obstacles in logical reasoning and processing raw information into structured ideas (Nurrahmah et al., 2025; Widiana et al., 2025).

Pinilih & Sukarno (2024) argues that current teaching methods often fail to bridge the gap between receptive processing and productive expression. This statement also has the same argument as Munir & Yafuz (2024) and Fatimah et al. (2026) reveals that students may understand general content but fail to transform it into coherent written work. This demonstrates that mastery of reading material does not automatically improve writing skills without appropriate integrative training (Afnita, 2022).

As part of its reform efforts, the Indonesian government, through the Permendikbudristek (2022), launched the National Curriculum policy, which emphasizes the strengthening of literacy and numeracy competencies. The teaching approach shifted to a text-based functional approach (Amir & Afnita, 2019; Lestyarini, 2019). This policy requires students to produce texts relevant to real life (Gea et al., 2024), which mandates schools to increase functional writing exercises (Ghaluh et al., 2022; Kemendikbudristek BSKAP, 2022).

At the junior high school level, functional literacy is realized through writing news articles (Novelti et al., 2022). News texts are deliberately chosen to represent productive writing skills because they demand a much higher degree of precision and absolute objectivity compared to other text types (Noveria et al., 2026). News texts play a crucial role in conveying current facts. Students are trained to report events factually, objectively, and systematically (Novelti et al., 2022; Simarmata et al., 2025). These skills require organizing information based on standard journalistic elements, such as the 5Ws + 1H (Hendrastuti & Rahmawati, 2023). Furthermore, news writing demands absolute objectivity and clear language to avoid ambiguity (Hendrastuti & Rahmawati, 2023). Writers must identify newsworthiness and present facts using the inverted pyramid structure (Wirahyuni & Martha, 2022). The need for this structural and linguistic precision makes news texts a valid instrument for assessing students' productive literacy competencies (Andani & Anggraini, 2023).

However, the cognitive demands of writing news texts pose technical challenges. Students often struggle to formulate a specific and focused lead (Wismanto et al., 2022). They also struggle to arrange events in chronological order, resulting in confusing information flow (Pane & Sanchez, 2023). Limited mastery of standard vocabulary hinders accurate description (Illa et al., 2023). Furthermore, the document analysis conducted by Syifa et al. (2022) demonstrated that students frequently failed to distinguish the boundaries between empirical facts and subjective opinions in their texts. As a result of the accumulation of these various cognitive and technical challenges, the quality of the news texts produced by students generally failed to meet the established competency standards.

The phenomenon of poor news writing skills was also observed at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari, Jambi Province. Based on initial observations and an analysis of grade documents, it was noted that the news writing proficiency of seventh-grade students' news writing proficiency remained below the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM). Specifically, 46% of students failed to reach the KKM score of 75. Students' written work reveals deficiencies in information detail, disorganized text structure, and disregard for proper writing conventions. These empirical findings warrant further investigation into the internal variables influencing student learning performance at this school. The issue of low news writing proficiency at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari reflects obstacles in students' cognitive and affective variables. Students' difficulty in transforming information into formal text structures demonstrates that writing skills do not exist in isolation but are closely linked to information processing in the brain and the underlying mental drive for learning. Analyzing the contributions of these internal variables is crucial for identifying solutions to improve student literacy at this school.

The issue of low news writing proficiency reflects obstacles in students' cognitive and affective variables. The primary cognitive predictor is reading comprehension, which serves as a source for acquiring knowledge schemas, vocabulary, and an understanding of text organization (Kim et al., 2024; Solanki & Patoliya, 2024). Specifically, reading comprehension helps students identify the distinct structure of a news text, enabling them to extract information to accurately build the 5W+1H elements. Without adequate reading comprehension skills, students face limitations in vocabulary and ideas when engaging in productive writing (Soto et al., 2023). In addition to cognitive abilities, affective variables like learning motivation significantly influence the writing process (Alzubi & Nazim, 2024; Zuhri et al., 2024). Based on the Expectancy-Value Theory, learning motivation determines students' persistence because writing requires sustained concentration and repeated revisions (Zuhri et al., 2024). Motivation serves as the driving factor for students' resilience in completing complex tasks (Camacho et al., 2023). Highly motivated students demonstrate concrete behaviors such as greater persistence in fact-checking, restructuring news flow, and selecting appropriate journalistic diction.

The synergy between reading comprehension skills and learning motivation is believed to develop news writing skills. However, a literature review reveals a research gap at the junior high school level. Most previous studies have tended to examine learning variables partially, focusing in isolation on teaching methods or specific media (Fadila et al., 2024; Rafianti, 2025; Rizki & Aprianti, 2024). There is a lack of research that simultaneously integrates cognitive (reading comprehension) and affective (learning motivation) variables to analyze their combined effect on news writing skills. Therefore, this study aims to describe and measure the individual and combined contributions of reading comprehension skills and learning motivation to the news writing skills of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari. The results of this study are expected to enrich integrated literacy studies by providing empirical evidence of the simultaneous relationship between reading comprehension and learning motivation in the context of junior high school education.

Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design aimed at testing and describing the extent to which independent variables contribute to the dependent variable. This design was specifically chosen because it is highly relevant for testing and predicting the contribution level of reading comprehension and learning motivation to news writing skills. The independent variables in this study include reading comprehension skills (X_1) and learning motivation (X_2). The dependent variable in this study is news writing skills (Y). This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari, Jambi Province. The population in this study consists of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari, distributed across five classes, with a total of 136 students. Sampling was conducted using the proportionate random sampling technique. Following the sampling guidelines proposed by Arikunto, a sample of 82 students was selected, which accounts for approximately 60% of the total population of 136 students.

Data collection was conducted using three methods. First, reading comprehension skills were measured using an objective test consisting of 60 multiple-choice questions designed based on indicators of literal, inferential, and critical comprehension. Second, learning motivation data was collected through the distribution of a closed-ended Likert scale questionnaire. This instrument was developed based on the Self-determination theory to measure indicators such as learning persistence, learning interest, attention to tasks, and achievement orientation. Third, news writing skills were measured using a performance test instrument. Students were asked to produce a news text based on a specified theme, which was then evaluated using a rubric. To demonstrate the reliability and validity of the performance assessment, the rubric covered several specific aspects: the completeness of the 5W+1H elements, news structure, language accuracy, information objectivity, and spelling usage. Before distribution, all instruments underwent a pilot test.

The data analysis was conducted in two main stages: the analysis of prerequisites and the hypothesis testing. The analysis of prerequisites utilized parametric statistics. This included a normality test using the Lilliefors test to ensure normal data distribution, a test of homogeneity of variances using Bartlett test to assess the equality of variance, and a linearity test to ensure linear relationships between variables before conducting the regression analysis.

Once the prerequisites are met, hypothesis testing is performed. To examine the contribution of each variable separately, Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis and simple linear regression are used, followed by a t-test. Meanwhile, to examine the simultaneous contribution of reading comprehension skills and learning motivation to news writing skills, the data is analyzed using multiple linear regression and an F-test. The percentage of contribution was calculated using the coefficient of determination (R^2) formula. Statistical decision-making criteria were based on interpreting the significance value ($p < 0.05$); values below this threshold indicate that the contribution is statistically significant. The entire statistical data processing process was assisted by SPSS version 26.

Results and Discussion

Description Statistic

This section describes the data collected in this study, namely (1) reading comprehension data, (2) learning motivation data, and (3) news writing skills data. First, reading comprehension data was collected using an objective test instrument. Based on the data analysis, this variable had a highest score of 95.122 and a lowest score of 48.780. The mean obtained was 75.164 with a standard deviation of 13.291. Academically, a mean score of approximately 75 indicates a moderate or adequate level of comprehension. However, the relatively large standard deviation reveals a wide variance among students. This wide

dispersion means that students' abilities are not uniform; while some students possess excellent reading skills, a significant portion still struggles at the lower end. The frequency distribution of the data shows that the majority of students fall into the score range of 70 to 80. These results indicate that students' ability to comprehend the literal, inferential, and critical aspects of the text is at an adequate level.

Second, learning motivation data was collected using a questionnaire based on a Likert scale. The analysis results show a highest score of 95.132 and a lowest score of 49.189. The mean value of the learning motivation variable is 72.512 with a standard deviation of 13.899. This mean score suggests a generally moderate level of motivation across the sample. Yet, the high standard deviation indicates that students' psychological drive is highly polarized. This reflects a significant gap between highly motivated students who show stable persistence in learning and those who severely lack intrinsic and extrinsic drive.

Third, data on news text writing skills were collected through a performance test. The highest score achieved by students was 93.750, while the lowest was 46.875. The mean score for this variable is 72.485 with a standard deviation of 11.571. This assessment is based on the accuracy of text structure, the completeness of the 5W+1H elements, and the use of linguistic conventions. This average score places the students in a moderate category, hovering near the Minimum Competency Criteria. Crucially, the wide score dispersion (SD = 11.571) statistically confirms the field phenomenon observed in the introduction: there is a stark gap between students who can successfully write news texts and those who face severe technical and cognitive difficulties in text production.

A summary of the data collected for each variable is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Reading Comprehension (X₁)</i>	<i>Learning Motivation (X₂)</i>	<i>News Writing Skills (Y)</i>
<i>N</i>	82	82	82
<i>The lowest score</i>	48.780	49.189	46.875
<i>The highest score</i>	95.122	95.132	93.750
<i>Mean</i>	75.164	72.512	72.485
<i>Standard deviation</i>	13.291	13.899	11.571

Prerequisite Tests for Analysis

Before hypothesis testing, the data were tested using three prerequisite tests. First, the normality test using the Liliefors technique showed that the observation values for all three variables (L_0 for $X_1 = 0.071$; $X_2 = 0.070$; $Y = 0.079$) were smaller than the table value (0.097), indicating that the data are normally distributed. Second, the homogeneity test using the Bartlett test showed a calculated chi-square value of 3.464, which is smaller than the table chi-square (5.991), meaning the data variances are homogeneous. Third, the linearity test showed that the calculated F-value for X_1 on Y (0.644) and X_2 on Y (1.055) were smaller than the F-table, confirming the relationships are linear. This confirms that any increase or decrease in students' reading comprehension (X_1) and learning motivation (X_2) corresponds to a proportional and constant change in their news writing skills (Y). Interpreting this linear relationship is highly important because the Pearson Product-Moment correlation and linear regression models fundamentally assume a straight-line relationship to accurately measure the degree of association; without fulfilling this assumption, the resulting predictive models and correlation coefficients would be statistically invalid. Based on these results, the data meet the requirements for analysis using parametric statistics.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to verify the validity of the working hypotheses formulated in this study. This testing will determine whether these working hypotheses should be accepted or rejected. There are three main hypotheses tested to examine the contribution of independent variables to the dependent variable. The first hypothesis tests the assumption regarding the contribution of reading comprehension skills to news writing skills. The second hypothesis tests the assumption regarding the contribution of learning motivation to news writing skills. The third hypothesis tests the assumption regarding the combined contribution of reading comprehension skills and learning motivation to news writing skills. The details of the test results for these three hypotheses are presented as follows.

The first hypothesis tests the contribution of reading comprehension skills to news writing skills. The results of the Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis show a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.749 with a significance level of 0.000. The coefficient of determination (R^2) obtained was 0.561. This indicates that reading comprehension skills contribute 56.10% to news writing skills. The t-test results showed a calculated t-value of 10.120, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.990, therefore, the first hypothesis is significantly accepted.

The second hypothesis tests the contribution of learning motivation to news writing skills. The analysis results show a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.636 with a significance level of 0.000. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.404, indicating that learning motivation contributes 40.45% to news writing skills. The t-test yielded a calculated t-value of 7.368, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.990, therefore, the second hypothesis is accepted.

The third hypothesis tests the combined contribution of reading comprehension skills and learning motivation to news writing skills. Multiple linear regression analysis yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.750. The multiple coefficients of determination (R^2) of 0.562 indicates that these two independent variables simultaneously contribute 56.25% to news writing skills. The F-test results show a calculated F-value of 50.470, which is greater than the critical F-value of 3.112, therefore, the third hypothesis is significantly accepted. A summary of the hypothesis testing results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient (r)</i>	<i>Coefficient of Determination (R^2)</i>	<i>Contribution (%)</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
X_1 to Y	0.749	0.561	56.10%	Significant
X_2 to Y	0.636	0.404	40.45%	Significant
X_1 and X_2 to Y	0.750	0.562	56.25%	Significant

Based on the results of statistical analysis, this study confirms the significant contribution of reading comprehension skills and learning motivation to news writing skills. These findings provide an empirical basis for understanding the interaction between cognitive and affective variables in the process of acquiring productive language skills among junior high school students. The magnitude of each independent variable's contribution to news writing skills is visualized in the graph in Figure 1.

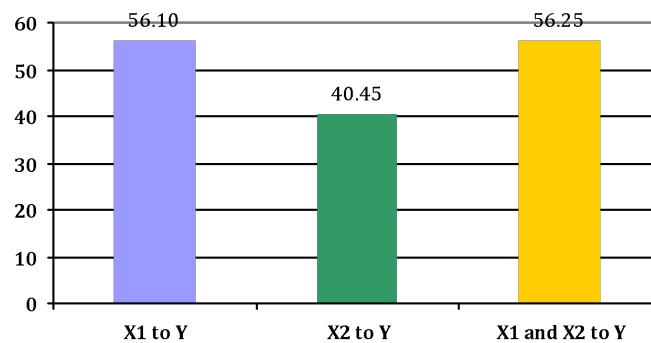


Fig. 1. The contribution of each variable to Y

The Contribution of Reading Comprehension Skills to News Writing Skills

The results of the first hypothesis test indicate the important role of reading comprehension skills in improving news writing skills, accounting for 56.10% of the variance. This percentage confirms that reading comprehension skills are a key factor for seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari in the text production process. This finding aligns with the research by Kim et al. (2024), which states that the quality of students' texts is significantly influenced by the completeness of information obtained through reading activities. A similar conclusion was also expressed by Solanki & Patoliya (2024), who found that logical reasoning skills resulting from reading are linearly and positively correlated with fluency in sentence construction in writing.

Writing news articles requires the inclusion of the 5W+1H elements. This requirement necessitates that students master both literal and inferential reading. The data from this study show that students with high reading comprehension scores can accurately select key facts before organizing them into a coherent news article. Specifically, the ability to comprehend factual and inferential information, along with understanding textual structure, directly helps students formulate and develop the mandatory 5W+1H elements in their news stories. This phenomenon supports the findings of Soto et al. (2023), who identified that mastery of reading texts can address issues related to limited standard vocabulary and errors in chronological sequencing in writing. Furthermore, this is also consistent with the research by Zhang et al. (2024) which states that a well-structured news article always begins with the student's ability to identify key information from the reading source.

The high value of this study's contribution provides empirical evidence regarding the literacy issues outlined in the introduction. The gap between receptive information processing and productive expression

highlighted by Ayu et al. (2025) has been shown to be bridged by strengthening strong reading comprehension skills. The data from this study confirm that the failure of some students at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari to distinguish between empirical facts and subjective opinions stems from their low reading comprehension skills. As a partial conclusion, improving news writing competencies in line with the National Curriculum targets requires systematic improvements in students' reading comprehension skills in the classroom.

The Contribution of Learning Motivation to News Writing Skills

The results of the second hypothesis test demonstrate that learning motivation contributes 40.45% to news writing skills. This figure establishes affective factors as a determinant of students' success in completing high-difficulty writing tasks. This finding aligns with the results of a study Alzubi & Nazim (2024), which concluded that students' success in complex academic tasks is highly dependent on their psychological drive. This conclusion is also supported by Zuhri et al. (2024), who demonstrated that the level of internal motivation is directly correlated with students' persistence in completing writing activities to completion.

Writing news articles requires strict technical discipline, from crafting the lead, constructing a logical chronology, to editing for standard language usage. Research data shows that students with high levels of learning motivation consistently demonstrate far greater perseverance in identifying and correcting grammatical errors in their drafts. These highly motivated students exhibit concrete behaviors such as greater persistence in fact-checking, meticulously improving the news structure, and choosing appropriate journalistic diction during the revision process. This empirical phenomenon strongly supports the findings of Camacho et al. (2023), who found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation serve as determinants of student focus during the manuscript revision stage. This is also consistent with the study Alzubi & Nazim (2024) which states that students' ability to adhere to standard text structure rules is always directly proportional to the magnitude of the affective motivation they possess during the learning process.

The high percentage of the contribution of learning motivation in this study provides a clear perspective on the literacy challenges outlined in the introduction. These data refute the common assumption that writing failures are primarily caused by linguistic technical weaknesses alone. Mastery of grammatical theory has been shown to have no impact on written work if students neglect its application due to a lack of learning motivation. The substandard quality of students' news texts, as initially found at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari, is in fact rooted in students' low mental engagement when facing technical writing challenges. As a conclusion to the second hypothesis, the school's efforts to meet the National Curriculum targets regarding text production require educators to continuously integrate affective stimulation in the classroom, alongside technical writing training.

The Contribution of Reading Comprehension Skills and Learning Motivation to News Writing Skills

Testing the third hypothesis demonstrated that reading comprehension skills and learning motivation together account for 56.25% of the variance in news writing skills. Statistically, this combined contribution of 56.25% is only slightly higher than the independent contribution of reading comprehension alone (56.10%). This phenomenon indicates that while learning motivation plays a significant role independently, its predictive power heavily overlaps with reading comprehension when both are combined in the regression model. It suggests that students who possess high reading comprehension inherently exhibit high motivation to complete the text, making the cognitive variable the more dominant predictor in this specific sample.

This composite figure establishes the synergy between cognitive and affective factors as the primary determinants of the quality of students' writing. This finding aligns with the results of a study Fadila et al. (2024) which concluded that mastery of productive language skills is the direct result of the integration of cognitive intelligence and affective stability. This empirical conclusion also strongly supports the findings of Rafianti (2025) who demonstrated that reading comprehension skills are responsible for organizing facts and vocabulary, while learning motivation works to integrate that material into a structured textual format. Conceptually, this implies that Indonesian language teachers cannot treat motivation as a standalone solution; instead, they must integrate critical reading exercises based on news texts alongside motivation-boosting strategies to achieve optimal writing results.

The distribution characteristics of the research data indicate that the students who achieved the highest scores on the news writing performance test were the same group of students who also achieved the highest scores on the objective reading test and the motivation questionnaire. This empirical phenomenon is consistent with the study Rizky & Aprianti (2024) which found that writing instruction is

certain to lose its effectiveness if executed in isolation without reinforcement of accompanying variables. Furthermore, this data is in fact consistent with the recommendations from the study Strong (2023), which demonstrates that improving students' text quality requires parallel interventions; teachers must foster the habit of critical reading and create a supportive learning environment simultaneously.

The high percentage of this combined contribution provides definitive confirmation of the resolution of the functional literacy issue highlighted in the introduction. The quality gap in news articles at SMP Negeri 30 Batang Hari has been proven to be overcome through the integration of structured reading analysis activities with psychological reinforcement within the curriculum. The figure of 56.25% demonstrates that more than half of the variation in the quality of students' news texts is directly controlled by these two internal variables. The remaining 43.75% is influenced by external variables outside the scope of this study, such as family environment, library facilities, and the effectiveness of teachers' instructional strategies (Casicas & Quirap, 2023; Metekohy et al., 2022). For instance, better library facilities can increase students' exposure to diverse news texts, while effective teacher strategies directly improve classroom engagement. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to elaborate on the possible influence of these external factors to build a more comprehensive model of news text literacy.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion presented, three conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, reading comprehension skills contribute significantly, accounting for 56.10% to news writing skills. This demonstrates that the ability to process information from reading is a cognitive prerequisite for producing accurate news articles. Second, learning motivation contributes significantly, accounting for 40.45%, to news writing skills. These results indicate that students' psychological drive to learn is a crucial factor supporting the systematic completion of writing tasks. Third, reading comprehension skills and learning motivation together contribute 56.25% to news writing skills. Although this combined contribution is significant, it is only marginally higher than the individual contribution of reading comprehension alone (56.10%). This indicates that reading comprehension acts as the dominant cognitive predictor for this skill, while the affective impact of motivation heavily overlaps with it within the simultaneous regression model. Based on these findings, improving the quality of students' writing requires specific practical steps from educators. Instead of general training, teachers are highly advised to implement critical reading exercises specifically based on actual news texts. Furthermore, educators should apply a journalism project-based learning (PBL) model and provide gradual, structured feedback during the news writing process to sustain student motivation. Given the remaining unexplained variance in this study, future research should expand beyond general external factors. Future researchers are recommended to examine other variables that are more specific to news writing competencies, such as journalistic vocabulary mastery, critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and the integration of online news media in Indonesian language learning.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : Dina Adila was responsible for the data collection, data analysis, and led the drafting of the manuscript. Afrita supervised the entire research project, provided conceptual guidance, and revised the manuscript. Syahrul Ramadhan validated the research methodology and data findings. Amril Amir provided critical reviews on the theoretical framework and contributed to the final manuscript revisions. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.
- Funding statement** : This research did not receive any funding.
- Conflict of interest** : All authors declare that they have no competing interests.
- Ethics Approval** : This research involved human participants and was conducted in accordance with standard ethical guidelines for educational research. Informed consent was obtained from the participating school prior to data collection.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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