

Optimizing School Library Strategies to Strengthen Reading Literacy Among Elementary Students: A Qualitative Case Study

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DOI: 10.12928/cece.v3i1.1670

Received: August 7, 2025. Revised: October 4, 2025. Accepted: May 10, 2026

Available Online: January 20th, 2025. Published Regularly: July 31st, 2025

ABSTRACT

Reading literacy is an important foundation for students' learning and academic development in elementary education. However, literacy achievement among elementary school students in Indonesia remains relatively low. This study aimed to examine school library strategies used to strengthen reading literacy among students at Mojosongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative case study design involving librarians, teachers, and students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. The data were analysed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while validity was ensured through source triangulation and member checking. The findings showed that reading literacy was supported through strengthening library management, implementing literacy programs through the School Literacy Program, encouraging teacher and parent involvement, improving access to reading facilities, and providing reading materials relevant to students' interests. Several challenges were also identified, including limited human resources, inadequate digital infrastructure, and limited updated book collections. In addition, students showed higher reading motivation through literacy reward programs and regular literacy activities integrated into school routines.

Keywords: elementary education; literacy culture; reading literacy; school library; library management.



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INTRODUCTION

Literacy can be understood as the ability to read and write. Literacy is a complex constellation of cognitive, social, and affective competencies that involve the use of symbol systems for expressing and sharing knowledge and ideas, information and experiences [1]. Reading literacy combines reading, thinking, and writing, focusing on a deep and reflective understanding of information [2]. In elementary education, reading literacy is closely related to students' ability to interpret information, develop comprehension skills, and build learning habits that support academic achievement [3]. Reading activities also contribute to cognitive

and social development because students learn to process ideas, understand contexts, and communicate information effectively through texts. Through reading literacy, individuals undergo a gradual and continuous learning process reflected in changes in behaviour, increased insight, interpretation skills, competencies, responsiveness, and the capacity to receive and process information.

Reading literacy has become increasingly important in the context of twenty-first-century education, where students are required to access, evaluate, and use information critically. The rapid development of digital technology and the growing flow of information require students to possess adequate literacy skills from an early age. Elementary school students who develop reading habits are more likely to demonstrate stronger comprehension abilities, broader knowledge, and better academic readiness in later stages of education [4]. Therefore, strengthening literacy culture at the elementary school level is considered an important foundation for lifelong learning.

However, literacy achievement among Indonesian students remains relatively low compared to many other countries. A study entitled *Most Literate Nations in the World* conducted by Central Connecticut State University in 2016 ranked Indonesia 60th out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest [5]. These findings indicate that literacy development remains a significant challenge in Indonesian education, particularly at the elementary school level. Low reading interest among students also reflects the limited integration of literacy culture into students' daily learning experiences both at school and at home.

Several factors contribute to low literacy achievement among elementary school students. These factors include limited access to reading materials, inadequate literacy facilities, low reading motivation, and insufficient literacy-supporting programs in schools [6]. In some schools, literacy activities are still implemented as routine administrative programs rather than integrated learning practices that actively engage students. In addition, students' reading preferences are changing due to the influence of digital entertainment and social media, which often reduce the amount of time allocated for reading printed materials. Consequently, schools need to develop learning environments that can encourage students to participate in meaningful literacy activities.

Elementary schools play an important role in supporting literacy development because they provide structured learning experiences during children's early educational stages. Schools also complement the role of families as students' first learning environment [6]. Teachers, school leaders, librarians, and parents collectively influence students' reading habits and attitudes toward literacy [7]. In this context, school libraries can function as educational facilities that support literacy development through reading resources, literacy programs, and learning support services. A school library is not only a place to store books but also a learning space that can encourage students to explore knowledge independently.

Previous studies have shown that school libraries contribute positively to students' reading literacy when they are supported by adequate facilities, accessible services, relevant reading collections, and active literacy programs [8], [9]. Literacy-supporting activities such as reading corners, storytelling sessions, book discussions, and school literacy programs can increase students' interest in reading and improve their engagement with books [10]. In addition, collaboration among teachers, librarians, and school leaders is important in creating a sustainable literacy culture within the school environment. Effective school library management can therefore support students' literacy experiences both inside and outside classroom learning activities.

Despite their important role, many school libraries in Indonesia still face several limitations. Some libraries have limited reading collections, inadequate facilities, and insufficient human resources. In many elementary schools, library services are still managed

manually, and digital-based literacy services have not been implemented optimally. In addition, literacy activities are sometimes conducted only during specific programs without long-term planning and evaluation. These conditions reduce the effectiveness of school libraries in supporting students' literacy development. Therefore, strengthening school library management and literacy strategies remains an important issue in elementary education.

The present study was conducted at Mojosoongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia, which recently experienced a school regrouping process. School regrouping or school merger policies often influence administrative systems, student populations, educational facilities, and learning management. As a result, school libraries also experience adjustments in collection management, service systems, and literacy program implementation. The increasing number of students and the integration of educational resources following regrouping create both opportunities and challenges for school library management. In this situation, effective literacy strategies are needed to ensure that the library continues to support students' reading development.

Initial observations and interviews with librarians indicated that the school library had implemented several literacy-supporting programs after the regrouping process. These programs included reading activities through the School Literacy Program, reading corners, and library membership systems. However, challenges related to limited infrastructure, collection updates, and library staffing were still identified. These conditions make the school an appropriate context for examining how library strategies are implemented to support reading literacy among elementary school students.

This study therefore aims to examine school library strategies used to strengthen students' reading literacy at Mojosoongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia. The study focuses on literacy-related strategies, supporting factors, and challenges experienced in library management and literacy implementation. The findings are expected to contribute to the discussion of literacy development in elementary education, particularly regarding the role of school libraries in supporting reading culture and student learning engagement.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine school library strategies in strengthening students' reading literacy at Mojosoongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia. A qualitative case study was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of literacy practices, library management, and participants' experiences within their real educational context. The study focused on understanding how the school library implemented literacy-supporting strategies following the school regrouping process.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The primary informants consisted of the school librarian, classroom teachers, and elementary school students who actively utilised the library facilities and participated in literacy activities. Informants were selected based on their involvement in school literacy programs, familiarity with library services, and direct experience with literacy-related activities implemented at the school. In addition, the school principal provided recommendations regarding participants who were considered capable of providing relevant information related to library management and literacy practices.

Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation was conducted to examine students' reading activities, library utilisation, literacy routines, and interactions within the school library environment. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with librarians, teachers, and students to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding literacy programs and library services. Meanwhile, document analysis involved reviewing school literacy program

documents, library work programs, visitor records, book inventories, and other supporting administrative documents related to literacy implementation.

The study was conducted in the school library environment of Mojosoongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia. Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The interview recordings and field notes were transcribed and organised into meaning units, categories, and themes to identify patterns related to school library strategies and literacy development. To ensure data trustworthiness, source triangulation and member checking were applied to confirm the consistency and accuracy of the findings obtained from different participants and data sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interviews, observations, and document analysis, several findings were identified regarding the strategies implemented by the school library to strengthen students' reading literacy. The analysis was conducted by organising interview transcripts and meaning units into interconnected categories and themes.

Strengthening School Library Management and Governance

Library management at Mojosoongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia, has improved following the school regrouping process. The librarian plays an important role in developing service management strategies, including collection management, administrative documentation, and book circulation services. The library has implemented visitor records and book inventory systems; however, these processes are still conducted manually due to limited Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources. Support from the school principal through policy direction and budget allocation contributes to the sustainability of library management. Nevertheless, limited staffing creates an imbalance in workload, particularly during book inventory and classification processes. A Grade V teacher stated, "Our library is now gradually being managed more effectively by the librarian." Despite these improvements, the librarian continues to manage all collection administration independently, resulting in a substantial workload.

Implementation of Literacy Programs to Strengthen Reading Interest

The school literacy program is systematically implemented through the School Literacy Program conducted every morning from Monday to Thursday. The 15-minute reading activity has gradually become part of students' daily routines. This program enables the library to introduce reading materials and encourage regular reading habits among students. The program has been positively received, particularly when reading materials align with students' interests. In addition to GLS activities, the library has established reading corners and is developing a book club as part of its literacy innovation initiatives. These activities indicate efforts to integrate literacy into school culture. One student stated, "Now we have reading activities every morning, so I often go to the library to borrow books because I want new reading materials." The librarian also described the book club and reading corners as sustainable literacy initiatives.

Active Participation of the School Community in Supporting Literacy

The school community, including the principal, teachers, librarian, students, and parents, contributes collaboratively to literacy activities. Teachers encourage reading activities, assign literacy-related tasks, and motivate students to utilise library services. The principal supports the integration of literacy programs into school activities and ensures that GLS is implemented consistently. Parents are informed about literacy activities during school meetings to encourage reading support at home. Teachers also assist students by assigning reading activities and accompanying them during library visits. A teacher explained, "We

encourage students to read, assign reading-related activities, and take them to the library regularly.” Communication with parents is considered important in supporting literacy practices beyond the classroom.

Availability of Facilities and Access Supporting Inclusive Literacy

The library provides a comfortable reading area, wireless internet access, and organised bookshelves. However, digital facilities such as library computers and information systems remain limited. Inclusive access for students with diverse learning needs has not yet been fully developed. Therefore, improvements in infrastructure are still necessary to ensure equitable literacy access for all students. The librarian stated, “In the future, we plan to organise a book donation program and propose additional funding for library development.”

Completeness and Relevance of Reading Collections

The library collection consists of fiction and nonfiction materials, including folktales, novels, short stories, comics, encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, and life-skills books. However, students expressed concerns regarding the limited availability of new and engaging non-academic reading materials. The library has proposed book donation initiatives and collaborated with teachers to provide reading materials aligned with the curriculum and students’ interests. One teacher stated, “Students often mention that the collection is limited, especially for non-academic books.” This finding indicates the importance of regularly updating library collections to maintain students’ reading engagement.

Structural and Operational Challenges in Literacy Management

Several obstacles were identified in managing literacy programs, including limited human resources, insufficient digital infrastructure, outdated collections, and varying levels of student interest in literacy activities. These conditions affect the effectiveness of library services and literacy implementation. The librarian explained, “Sometimes I feel overwhelmed managing book inventories, from recording new books to classifying them.” Limited staffing and manual administration contribute to slower service processes and reduced efficiency in library management.

Student Motivation as an Indicator of Literacy Development

Students’ reading motivation increased following the implementation of GLS and the introduction of library membership cards. Students expressed enthusiasm toward borrowing books and participating in literacy activities. Reward systems, including internet data incentives, were also provided to encourage reading participation. However, students’ reading interest remained influenced by the variety and attractiveness of reading materials. Illustrated books, comics, and newly acquired books were particularly popular among students. One teacher stated, “Students are enthusiastic about using library cards to borrow non-academic books.” These findings indicate that literacy motivation is closely related to the availability of engaging reading resources and supportive literacy activities.

Promotional and Communication Strategies for Literacy Engagement

The library promotes literacy activities through collaboration with teachers, school social media, and communication during school meetings. Librarians also introduce new library services directly to students and encourage them to participate in literacy programs. The principal supports literacy communication by reminding teachers to inform parents about GLS implementation. Effective communication among stakeholders contributes to broader participation in literacy activities. A Grade V teacher explained, “During meetings, the principal reminds teachers to inform parents about the school literacy program.”

Effectiveness of the Library Service System

The library has implemented book borrowing and return services, although these services are still manually managed. The circulation system supports students’ access to reading materials and encourages active library participation through membership cards.

However, digital services such as online catalogues, digital searches, and e-book systems are not yet available. The development of technology-based library services is therefore necessary to improve information access and service efficiency in the digital era.

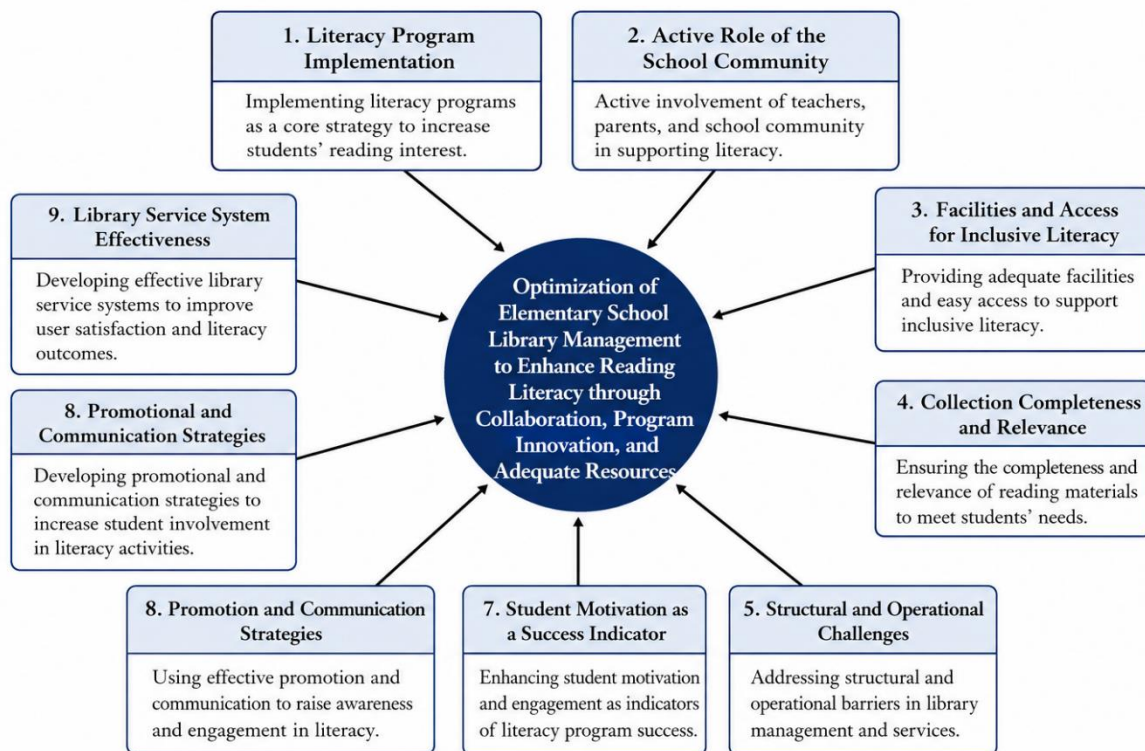


Figure 1. Result of the qualitative analysis (nine sub-themes identified in the study)

The findings of this study demonstrate that the school library at Mojosonggo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia, has implemented multiple strategies to strengthen students' reading literacy through library management, literacy programs, community participation, and service development. These findings indicate that literacy development in elementary schools requires not only reading activities but also institutional support, collaborative participation, and sustainable literacy management. The results further suggest that school libraries can function as active learning environments that facilitate literacy engagement and support students' academic development.

One important finding concerns the strengthening of library management and governance following the school regrouping process. The librarian played a central role in organising collections, managing circulation systems, and implementing literacy-related services. Although the library administration system remained largely manual due to limited ICT infrastructure, the findings indicate that management improvement contributed positively to library functionality. Previous studies have emphasised that effective school library management influences students' access to information and their participation in literacy activities. School libraries contribute significantly to improving students' reading literacy when supported by effective management systems, adequate collections, and accessible services [11]. Literacy development is closely associated with internal and external learning factors, including access to learning resources and supportive educational environments [12].

The findings also demonstrate that institutional support from the school principal contributed to the sustainability of literacy programs. Administrative support through policy direction and budget allocation enabled the library to continue implementing literacy activities

despite infrastructure limitations. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of leadership support in literacy implementation. School leaders play a strategic role in integrating literacy into school culture by establishing literacy-supporting policies, coordinating literacy activities, and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders. In this study, the principal's involvement appeared to strengthen the continuity of literacy programs after the school regrouping process.

Another significant finding relates to the implementation of the School Literacy Program as a routine literacy activity. The daily 15-minute reading activity gradually became part of students' learning habits and encouraged regular interaction with reading materials. The findings indicate that structured literacy routines contribute to the formation of reading culture in elementary schools. Previous studies have similarly reported that literacy routines positively influence students' reading engagement and literacy awareness. Regular literacy activities before classroom instruction can strengthen reading habits and improve students' engagement with texts [13]. Reading routines also provide students with opportunities to interact with various forms of reading materials beyond textbook-oriented learning.

The implementation of reading corners and book clubs in this study further demonstrates the importance of literacy innovation in creating engaging reading environments. These literacy initiatives provided students with alternative opportunities to access reading materials in more flexible and enjoyable settings. Students expressed greater enthusiasm toward reading activities when books matched their interests and preferences. This finding supports previous research showing that students' reading interest is strongly influenced by the relevance and attractiveness of reading materials. Access to age-appropriate, visually engaging, and interest-based books increases students' willingness to read voluntarily and consistently.

The findings additionally highlight the importance of collaborative participation among members of the school community. Teachers, librarians, parents, and school leaders contributed collectively to literacy implementation [14]. Teachers encouraged students to read, assigned literacy-related tasks, and accompanied students during library visits. Parents were informed about literacy programs through meetings and school communication activities. These findings indicate that literacy development is not solely dependent on school programs but also influenced by collaborative educational support.

Previous studies have shown that family involvement contributes positively to students' literacy habits, particularly at the elementary level. Families function as students' first literacy environment, while schools provide structured literacy experiences [15]. Therefore, collaboration between schools and families is essential in strengthening literacy culture. In this study, communication between teachers and parents supported the continuity of literacy activities beyond classroom settings. Students who received encouragement from both teachers and parents appeared more engaged in reading activities and library participation.

The findings regarding literacy-supporting facilities also demonstrate the importance of physical learning environments in promoting reading engagement. The library provided reading areas, internet access, and organised bookshelves that supported students' access to reading materials. However, the study identified limitations in digital infrastructure, including the absence of library computers, online catalogues, and digital service systems. These limitations restricted the development of digital literacy services and reduced service efficiency.

The issue of limited digital infrastructure has also been identified in previous studies concerning literacy implementation in Indonesian schools. Inadequate digital facilities, limited internet access, and insufficient technological readiness continue to hinder digital literacy implementation, particularly in schools with limited educational resources [16]. Similar challenges were identified in the present study, where manual administration systems increased

librarians' workloads and reduced operational efficiency. Consequently, digital transformation remains an important consideration for school library development.

In addition to infrastructure limitations, the study found that the relevance and completeness of reading collections significantly influenced students' reading interest. Students preferred illustrated books, comics, and newly updated reading materials. However, the availability of such materials remained limited. Teachers also noted that students frequently requested more engaging non-academic books. These findings indicate that reading engagement is closely associated with students' preferences and accessibility to attractive reading materials.

Previous research has consistently emphasised the importance of updating library collections to maintain students' literacy participation [17]. Reading materials that correspond to students' interests encourage voluntary reading and increase reading frequency. In elementary education contexts, fiction books, comics, and illustrated texts often function as introductory literacy resources that motivate students to engage with reading activities more consistently. Therefore, school libraries need to balance academic and recreational reading materials to maintain literacy engagement among students with diverse reading preferences.

The study also identified several structural and operational challenges affecting literacy implementation. Limited staffing, outdated collections, and insufficient ICT facilities reduced the effectiveness of library services. The librarian managed inventory, circulation, and collection administration independently, resulting in substantial workloads. These findings illustrate the operational challenges frequently experienced by school libraries with limited human resources.

Previous studies similarly identified staffing limitations as a major challenge in school library management. Limited professional support often affects service quality, literacy innovation, and administrative efficiency [18], [19]. Without adequate staffing and professional development opportunities, librarians may experience difficulties implementing sustainable literacy programs. Therefore, strengthening human resource capacity remains an important component of school library development.

Another important finding concerns student motivation as an indicator of literacy participation. Students demonstrated greater enthusiasm toward literacy activities following the implementation of library membership cards and reward systems. Incentives such as internet data rewards and recognition encouraged students to participate more actively in reading activities and book borrowing. These findings indicate that motivation strategies may support literacy engagement when implemented appropriately.

Previous studies have shown that reward systems can positively influence literacy participation, particularly among elementary school students [20]. However, rewards should function as supportive mechanisms rather than primary objectives of literacy activities. Sustainable literacy development requires students to gradually develop intrinsic motivation toward reading. In this study, students' enthusiasm was also influenced by the availability of attractive books and enjoyable literacy activities, suggesting that reading motivation is shaped by both environmental and psychological factors.

The strategic use of communication and promotion also contributed to literacy engagement in this study. The library utilised school social media, teacher collaboration, and school meetings to promote literacy activities and library services. Communication between stakeholders strengthened awareness regarding literacy programs and encouraged broader participation among students and parents. Promotional strategies play an important role in increasing library visibility and encouraging user participation. Social media can function as an accessible communication platform for informing students and parents about literacy programs, reading activities, and library services. In elementary school contexts, literacy

promotion also contributes to the formation of positive perceptions toward reading and library participation.

The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of library services remains strongly associated with accessibility and operational efficiency. Although manual circulation systems enabled students to borrow books, the absence of technology-based services limited broader access to information. Digital catalogues, electronic borrowing systems, and online information access were unavailable in the library studied. Consequently, students' literacy experiences remained dependent on physical collections and direct library visits.

Previous studies have emphasised the importance of digital transformation in school libraries to support literacy development in the digital era [21]. Digital library services can expand access to information, improve operational efficiency, and support students' digital literacy competencies. Features such as online catalogues, digital collections, and learning platforms enable students to access reading materials more flexibly. Therefore, the integration of digital technologies into school libraries should be considered an important component of future literacy development strategies.

The discussion of this study also suggests that literacy development should be viewed as a multidimensional educational process involving institutional, social, and technological factors. Reading literacy is not solely influenced by students' individual motivation but also by environmental support, access to reading materials, school culture, and collaborative participation. The implementation of literacy programs alone may not produce sustainable outcomes unless accompanied by effective management, supportive infrastructure, and consistent participation from the school community.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that school regrouping processes create both opportunities and challenges for literacy management. On one hand, regrouping may increase access to shared resources and institutional collaboration. On the other hand, it may create administrative adjustments, increased workloads, and infrastructure limitations that affect literacy implementation. The experience of Mojosongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia, demonstrates that literacy programs can continue to develop despite these challenges when supported by collaborative participation and institutional commitment.

This study contributes to the discussion of literacy development in elementary education by highlighting the role of school libraries as learning environments rather than merely book storage facilities. Libraries can support reading engagement through literacy programs, collaborative participation, accessible facilities, and relevant reading collections. The findings also reinforce the importance of integrating literacy activities into school culture through routine implementation and shared responsibility among educational stakeholders.

Several practical implications can be identified from this study. First, schools need to strengthen library infrastructure and ICT development to improve literacy access and service efficiency. Second, regular updates to reading collections are necessary to maintain students' reading engagement. Third, professional development opportunities for librarians should be prioritised to improve literacy program management and service innovation. Finally, collaboration among teachers, parents, school leaders, and external literacy organisations should be strengthened to support sustainable literacy culture in elementary schools.

Overall, the findings indicate that school libraries play an important role in strengthening reading literacy among elementary school students. Literacy-supporting strategies involving management improvement, literacy routines, collaborative participation, and service development contribute to students' reading engagement and literacy participation. Although several challenges remain, particularly related to infrastructure and staffing limitations, the implementation of consistent and collaborative literacy strategies can support the development of sustainable reading culture in elementary education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that school library strategies play an important role in strengthening reading literacy among elementary school students. The findings indicate that literacy development is supported through effective library management, the implementation of structured literacy programs, collaboration among school communities, and the provision of accessible reading facilities and relevant book collections. The School Literacy Program, reading corners, and library membership programs contributed to the development of students' reading habits and literacy engagement. The study also identified several challenges, including limited human resources, inadequate digital infrastructure, and limited availability of updated reading materials. Despite these limitations, collaborative support from teachers, librarians, school leaders, and parents contributed to the sustainability of literacy activities at Mojosongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia. These findings suggest that school libraries should be developed not only as book repositories but also as learning environments that support literacy participation and students' reading motivation. Strengthening digital library services, improving library collections, and enhancing librarian professional capacity are important considerations for future literacy development in elementary schools.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the principal, teachers, librarian, students, and school community of Mojosongo V Public Elementary School, Surakarta, Indonesia, for their participation and support during the research process. Appreciation is also extended to the supervising lecturer and all parties who contributed to the completion of this study.

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