Strengthening Literacy Competencies through Islamic Religious Education Learning in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the critical issue of low religious literacy among elementary students in Indonesia. It aims to explore how Islamic Education (PAI) teachers work to strengthen students' literacy competence through targeted learning systems. Employing Romiszowski's framework, the study analyzes problem identification, solution selection, implementation, and evaluation, using a phenomenological qualitative approach. Data were gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings show that religious literacy is primarily perceived as the ability to read and write, especially the Qur'an. Programs such as Literacy Week and Spiritual Friday significantly improved students' basic religious literacy. Students demonstrated notable progress in Qur'anic reading, advancing from pre-basic to basic proficiency, with some achieving a skilled level. These initiatives proved effective in raising students' understanding and practice of religious literacy. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges surrounding religious literacy in Indonesian primary schools. It emphasizes the urgency of enhancing literacy competencies, particularly in religious contexts, for the future of education. By focusing on early education, this study underscores the need for sustained and innovative efforts to improve religious literacy, ensuring students are well-prepared for future educational challenges. Ultimately, it highlights the importance of creating a literate, well-rounded generation, capable of navigating a changing educational landscape.
Keywords: *Student competence; Religious literacy; Islamic religious education; Effective learning; Elementary School (SD)*

ABSTRAK
Studi ini membahas isu kritis tentang rendahnya literasi agama di kalangan siswa sekolah dasar di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) bekerja untuk memperkuat kompetensi literasi siswa melalui sistem pembelajaran yang tepat

sasaran. Dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja Romiszowski, penelitian ini menganalisis identifikasi masalah, pemilihan solusi, implementasi, dan evaluasi, dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa literasi agama terutama dianggap sebagai kemampuan membaca dan menulis, terutama Al-Qur'an. Program-program seperti Pekan Literasi dan Jumat Kerohanian secara signifikan meningkatkan literasi agama dasar siswa. Para siswa menunjukkan kemajuan penting dalam membaca Al Qur'an, meningkat dari kemampuan pra-dasar menjadi kemampuan dasar, dengan beberapa mencapai tingkat terampil. Inisiatif ini terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman dan praktik literasi agama siswa. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang tantangan seputar literasi agama di sekolah dasar di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya meningkatkan kompetensi literasi, khususnya dalam konteks agama, untuk masa depan pendidikan. Dengan berfokus pada pendidikan usia dini, studi ini menggarisbawahi perlunya upaya berkelanjutan dan inovatif untuk meningkatkan literasi agama, memastikan siswa siap menghadapi tantangan pendidikan di masa depan. Pada akhirnya, studi ini menyoroti pentingnya menciptakan generasi yang melek huruf dan berpengetahuan luas, yang mampu menavigasi lanskap pendidikan yang terus berubah.
Kata Kunci: Kompetensi siswa; Literasi agama; Pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

Literacy competence has now become a mainstream issue that is discussed by academics and governments around the world (Bruinenberg et al., 2021). For example, in America, the policy of strengthening literacy has been required since primary education, so that the literacy index of students in America is very high. Likewise, for Finland, one of the main emphasis points of competence that must be possessed by students is literacy competence. As a result, Finland is ranked 1st in the world regarding student literacy competencies (O'Neill, 2010). The importance of literacy competence is also well realized by China (Prasetyo et al., 2018). Until now, one of the countries with the strongest economy in the world cannot be separated from the support of human resources (HR) who have literate characters. These ideal facts show that literacy competence is one of the main requirements for the progress of a nation. So with this, seeking to strengthen literacy competencies for students is a necessity, including for Indonesia.

However, in fact, in the Indonesian context, literacy competence is still a worrying problem among students(Munabiah Lestari & Saidah, 2023). Of all provinces in Indonesia, there are 9 provinces in the moderate literacy activity category, 24 provinces in the low literacy activity category, and 1 province in the very low literacy activity category Several studies have shown that reading interest is positively correlated with reading habits and reading ability. Reading interest in Indonesians is low, reading habits will definitely be low, and low reading habits will also have an impact on reading ability, of course also low (Aflah Husnaini Matondang et al., 2023). Tragically, in 2019, as reported by the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Indonesia ranked the 10th lowest country in the East Asia region in reading interest.

However, in the Indonesian context, literacy competence is still a worrying problem among students. Of all the provinces in Indonesia, 9 provinces fall into the category of moderate literacy activity, 24 provinces fall into the category of low literacy activity, and 1 province falls into the category of very low literacy activity Several studies have shown that interest in reading is positively correlated with reading habits and reading ability. If the

interest in reading among Indonesians is low, reading habits will definitely be low, and low reading habits will also have an impact on reading ability, of course also low. Tragically, in 2019, as reported by the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Indonesia ranked as the 10th lowest country in the East Asian region in reading interest.

Other data obtained in 2011, UNESCO issued data on the Indonesian reading index of only 0.001. According to UNESCO, this means that out of a thousand people there is only one who is interested in reading books (Ramadlan, 2021). Likewise, the results of the PISA survey in 2018 placed Indonesia at number 74, aka the sixth rank from the bottom. Indonesian students' reading ability with a score of 371 is in 74th position, mathematics ability gets 379 in 73rd position, and science ability with a score of 396 is in 71st position. The 2022 PISA results show that Indonesia's literacy learning outcome ranking has increased by 5 to 6 positions compared to PISA 2018. This increase is the highest achievement in rank (percentile) throughout Indonesia's history participating in PISA. Looking at these facts, it seems that reading and writing are not yet deeply rooted among elementary school students. So, building literacy competencies of elementary school students is an important and very urgent agenda(Saadati & Sadli, 2019). In this context, the policy of strengthening Qur'anic literacy as part of improving the quality of Islamic religious education needs to be supported and developed to be more effective. The implementation of policies such as KMA No. 211/2011 on Guidelines for the Development of National PAI Standards still requires follow-up so that the impact is more real and significant in building literacy based on religious values. In that regard, education is still considered the right approach to building literacy competencies, including Islām Religious Education (Sultani et al., 2023).

In the last five years, efforts to improve literacy competencies in PAI learning have been the focus of researchers in Indonesia. First, Ihsan's research (2018) focused on how to strengthen the ability to read and write PAI in Islamic boarding schools. With a descriptive qualitative approach, the results of his research found an essential thing. According to this study, one of the efforts to realize the strengthening of Islām Religious Education in schools/madrasas based on pesantren literacy is the reformulation of the Islām Religious Education curriculum in schools/madrasas using the pesantren pattern.

Second, Wahidin's study (2018) on the implementation of media literacy in the learning process of Islām Religious Education and Budi Pekerti. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, the results of his research found that PAI teachers and media affect students' literacy skills. The results of his research recommend that PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers must have media literacy so that the learning process carried out is more effective and efficient in delivering students to achieve the planned learning objectives.

Third, research by Siti Nur Arifah et al (2021) Implementation of the Literacy Program in Islām Religious Education Subjects at SDN 4 Palangka Raya. Through a descriptive qualitative approach. The results of his research recommend that the stages of literacy at SDN 4 Palangka Raya reach the second stage, namely the reading and writing stages. Furthermore, the application of literacy at SDN 4 Palangka Raya is not in accordance with the guidance in the GLN and GLNB guidebooks. This is because the books that are often used in literacy during PAI subjects are textbooks, whereas the appropriate books should be non-textbooks. Supporting factors for the application of literacy in PAI subjects are the teacher's ability to utilize technology and learning media so that students can have 4 aspects of literacy

skills. While the inhibiting factors are the lack of assistance, the lack of non-subject books and laziness in students.

In contrast to previous studies, this study focuses on strengthening the literacy competence of reading the Qurʾān through PAI learning in elementary schools. The urgency of this research is supported by three main reasons. First, the affirmation of the Ministry of Education and Culture as stated in Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards, which emphasizes the importance of strengthening the competencies of literacy, numeracy, and the profile of Pancasila learners (Indonesia, 2021). Qur'anic literacy has an important role in shaping the character of Pancasila learners, especially in the aspects of religiosity and noble character. Second, that in 2045 Indonesia will enter a golden age, where the younger generation plays an important role in determining the nation's progress (Simanjuntak, 2019). Qur'anic literacy, as part of religious literacy, is needed to build a critical understanding of religious values that become moral and spiritual foundations. To prepare a generation capable of facing future challenges, literacy is the main requirement for the creation of progressive change (Kusumawardhani et al., 2019). The condition for progressive change is high literacy skills. Third, Islamic religious education is part of the national education system whose main objectives target four main things. These are faith and piety and noble character, intellectual competence, attitudinal competence and national competence. To achieve these four things, literacy competence is an absolute requirement that must be strengthened, not least through the Islamic education learning system. Therefore, this research becomes something new and complements the study of literacy studies that have been done before. In an effort to explore how PAI teachers strengthen these three things, the five-stage learning system theory from (Romiszowski, 1982) is used, namely problem definition, analysis, selection and development of appropriate solutions, implementation, and evaluation. Third, Islamic religious education as part of the national education system aims to build four main competencies: faith and piety and noble character, intellectual competence, attitude competence, and national competence. Qur'anic literacy supports the achievement of these four competencies in a more holistic and integrated way. This is in line with the need to not only teach reading skills, but also instill a deep understanding of religious teachings in the context of students' daily lives. This study utilizes Romiszowski's (1982) five-stage learning system theory to strengthen Qur'ānic literacy in primary schools. The first stage, problem definition, aims to identify Qur'ānic literacy gaps, such as students' difficulties in reading and understanding Qur'ānic verses. Next, an analysis is conducted to examine the factors causing low literacy, including limited teaching methods and lack of supporting materials. The next stage is solution selection and development, which involves designing innovative learning strategies, such as the use of technology or context-based approaches, that suit students' needs. After that, the designed solutions are implemented at the implementation stage, where the Qur'an-based literacy method is applied in PAI learning activities. Finally, the evaluation stage is conducted to assess the effectiveness of the strategies used through formative and authentic assessments, so as to ensure an improvement in students' literacy competencies. This five-stage approach supports more focused and holistic PAI learning in an effort to improve students' Qur'anic literacy.

METHODS

Type and Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methodology, which aims to deeply understand the subjective experiences of PAI Teachers in implementing a learning system to improve religious literacy. This approach is relevant for exploring the perceptions, challenges and strategies teachers use in their specific contexts, thus providing rich and deep insights. The research was conducted at SDN 249 Astanaanyar, Astanaanyar Sub-district, Bandung City, West Java.

Data and Data Sources

The research subjects consisted of three respondents from SDN 249 Astanaanyar, namely the Principal, the Vice Principal for Curriculum and one PAI teacher. The selection of respondents was done selectively by considering their roles as policy formulators, coordinators, and implementers of the religious literacy program, thus having direct involvement in the implementation of the program. The PAI teachers selected were individuals with practical experience in teaching, according to the religious literacy policy guidelines (Hujar & Matthews, 2021). Respondents were selected based on the following criteria: a minimum of two years of teaching experience, involvement in religious literacy programs such as Literacy Week, and significant contributions in formulating literacy policies at school. The principal's recommendation was also used to ensure representation of practical experience and relevance to policy guidelines. This selection approach ensured that the three respondents had in-depth experience in the implementation of religious literacy policies and programs, in accordance with the principles of phenomenology which emphasizes in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of individuals directly involved in the phenomenon under study.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were designed to understand the focus of the research problem and analyze the application of Romiszowski's five-step learning system: problem definition, analysis, solution selection, implementation, and evaluation. Observation was used to observe learning practices, while documentation supported evidence of learning. Prior to data collection, permission for participation was obtained from the teacher. Additional validation was conducted through focused interviews with the principal and document analysis related to students with diverse literacy level (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted through steps adapted from Creswell (1998). First, PAI teachers' experiences were described based on the data collected. Second, significant statements were identified and grouped into meaningful units according to Romiszowski's learning system. Third, teachers' responses were analyzed to identify key themes, such as learning strategies and their impact on students. Fourth, validation was conducted through member checks, ensuring the data accurately reflected the subjects' experiences. Finally, the results of the study were summarized in a report highlighting the dynamics of religious literacy learning in primary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Mapping Literacy Problems

In relation to the mapping of literacy issues, this study found six essential issues, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Mapping literacy issues

No	Identification of students' literacy skills and follow-up efforts
1.	Diagnostic Assessment
2.	Student categorization
3.	Differentiated Learning
4.	Student Collaboration
5.	Routine Observation
6.	Special Attention for students with special needs

Based on Table 1, the six essentials are explained as follows. First, identifying students' literacy skills, which in the research location is called diagnostic assessment. This assessment is a process where PAI teachers conduct cognitive and non-cognitive diagnostic assessments at the beginning of learning. Second, categorizing students based on the diagnostic assessment results. In this activity students are categorized based on their literacy skills to design more effective learning strategies. Third, differentiated learning, which is learning that is tailored to the needs of each student. It aims to ensure that each individual gets attention according to his or her ability level, so that each student can reach his or her potential without feeling left behind or burdened. Fourth, student collaboration is emphasized as a means to encourage cooperation and interaction between students, creating a learning environment conducive to learning from each other and developing social skills. Fifth, regular observations are made to assess students' development at regular intervals, so that the approach applied is always relevant to their needs and progress. Sixth, special attention is given to students with specific needs, especially those who show significant differences in literacy skills. This approach aims to support their development in an inclusive learning environment. In addition, the study produced diagnostic assessment instruments in visual form to help understand and meet students' needs more easily and intuitively. This approach demonstrates a serious effort in ensuring every student, including those with special needs, receives optimal support to achieve learning success. In addition to the explanation of the six essentials, the study derived a diagnostic assessment instrument in the form of Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. 6th grade Non-Cognitive Diagnostic Instrument

Literacy issues in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning are a challenge that requires a comprehensive strategy, especially in identifying students' literacy skills. This study found that PAI teachers use diagnostic assessments at the beginning of learning to evaluate students' literacy levels, both cognitively and non-cognitively. Cognitive assessments focus on academic and intellectual abilities, while noncognitive assessments include attitude, motivation, and understanding of religious values (Sufiani & Putra, 2023). Through this assessment, teachers gain an initial picture of students' understanding of Islamic concepts and basic literacy skills, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking (Sopian et al., 2022). The results of this diagnostic assessment were used to classify students based on their literacy level. Students are grouped into high, medium and low categories. This grouping aims to design more effective learning strategies that suit the needs of each group. With customized strategies, teachers can provide challenges for high-literacy students to develop their skills, while low-literacy students can get more attention in the form of intensive guidance and additional practice (Ilyas & Maknun, 2023).

To optimize learning, PAI teachers apply approaches tailored to each group of students. Students with high literacy, for example, are given more complex challenges to improve their critical skills, while students who are still in the basic literacy stage get additional support. This strategy ensures that each student learns according to his or her capacity and has the opportunity to develop to his or her potential. In addition, regular and continuous observations of students' development are made to periodically assess their progress. Through these observations, teachers can adjust learning methods and approaches to keep them relevant to each student's needs. Continuous observation also helps teachers to identify areas that need improvement and provide constructive feedback to improve students' skills (Tambak, 2015).

In addressing literacy issues, PAI teachers adopt a holistic approach that covers both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects. The cognitive aspect focuses on mastering academic concepts and skills, while the non-cognitive aspect includes attitudes, motivation and religious values that play an important role in religious education (Suprapto, 2020). Through this comprehensive approach, PAI teachers are expected to create a learning environment that supports students' balanced development, both in religious understanding and general literacy skills (Miftakhul Khasanah & Muhammad Abduh, 2023).

This study highlights the importance of diagnostic assessment, student classification, continuous observation and a holistic approach in addressing literacy issues in PAI learning. Through these steps, PAI teachers can provide targeted support that enables every student, including those with special needs, to make optimal progress in literacy skills. This approach is an important foundation for improving students' literacy skills in PAI learning, both in religious understanding and communication skills needed in daily life.

2. Analysis of student literacy problems

Analyzing students' literacy issues is an important step in understanding the barriers faced in developing reading, writing, speaking, listening and critical thinking skills. General literacy, such as the ability to read and write, not only improves students' basic skills but is also an important foundation in supporting religious literacy, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. The relationship between general literacy and religious literacy is very close, as general literacy skills serve as a bridge to understanding religious texts, such as Qur'anic commentaries, hadith, and religious social issues.In PAI learning, general literacy supports religious literacy in various aspects. For example, in-depth reading skills not only help students understand Qur'anic texts, but also allow them to explore the contextual meaning of the verses. Writing skills allow students to pour out their understanding in the form of essays or structured reflections, so that they can integrate religious values with daily life. Speaking skills, on the other hand, help students convey their thoughts and arguments in discussions on religious topics, thus enhancing their critical understanding of the social context of religion.

This study identified several key strategies in integrating general literacy and religious literacy in PAI learning. First, teachers' mastery of various learning strategies enables them to design approaches that are responsive to students' varying ability levels. Teachers can use religious texts relevant to daily life to connect religious concepts with students' real-life experiences. For example, discussions about Qur'anic verses related to social justice can strengthen students' critical thinking skills while improving their religious understanding. Secondly, responsive and inclusive learning strategies are essential to creating an empowering learning ecosystem. Teachers should blend general literacy approaches with religious literacy, such as utilizing critical reading strategies to analyze tafsir or hadith. These skills can help students not only understand religious texts literally but also interpret and apply them in the context of their lives. Third, integrated literacy assessments need to be used to assess students' abilities holistically. For example, the Bil Hikmah method assesses not only the ability to read the Qur'an but also aspects of deep understanding and social relevance of the text. With assessments that include general and religious literacy, teachers can identify students' specific needs and design more effective learning strategies (Nurhasanah et al., 2021). With an integrated approach, general literacy and religious literacy

complement each other in PAI learning. General literacy skills help students understand religious values more critically, while religious literacy strengthens students' moral and spiritual dimensions. This relationship creates a synergy that is essential for students' holistic development in intellectual, spiritual and social aspects.

Table 2. Placement Test Criteria for Reading Al-Quran Method Bil Hikmah

No	Qur'an Reading Level	Criteria Description
1.	Advanced Level	• Tahsin Reading • Practical tajweed • Mastering tajweed theory
2.	Skilled Level	• Reading fluently • Practical tajweed tends to be correct • No knowledge of tajweed theory
3.	Basic Level	• Reading Hijaiyah letters connect fluently • Many practical tajweed mistakes
4.	Pre-Basic Level 2	• Can read connected hijaiyah letters • Reads slowly or stammers • Reads conjoined hijaiyah letters, the makhraj is not correct
5.	Pre-Basic Level 1	• Does not recognize the conjoined hijaiyah letters. • Can read the hijaiyah letters independently, but they are still mixed up. • Can read hijaiyah letters independently

Students' literacy problems in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) show complexity involving various internal and external factors. As part of the effort to improve literacy, the ability to read, write, speak, listen and understand becomes the main focus in learning. Literacy constraints, such as limited access to reading materials and a less supportive learning environment, are major challenges for students in developing literacy skills optimally. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play an important role in overcoming students' literacy challenges, including low motivation and lack of learning environment support. As explained by Zulaiha & Busro (2020) the success of literacy learning depends on teachers' readiness and competence in implementing appropriate learning strategies. Teacher workshops and training are important solutions to update teaching methods, improve understanding of literacy materials and help teachers understand students' diverse literacy needs (Nurhasanah et al., 2021).

However, internal fsuch as student motivation and reading culture are also significant obstacles that affect literacy levels, especially in PAI learning. Many Indonesian students show low interest in reading despite various literacy initiatives launched by the government. As revealed by Herlina and Haris (2022 , low motivation to read can be caused by a lack of awareness of the importance of literacy and the lack of reading habituation from an early age. Students' mindsets that tend to view literacy as a boring activity also contribute to their low level of engagement in reading activities. A culture of literacy that has not been fully embedded in the family and community environment further exacerbates this condition. Kartini (2021) highlights that the lack of parental support in providing reading materials and encouraging children to read at home is a major obstacle in developing reading habits. This factor is exacerbated by the lack of access to quality reading materials at school and the limited time allocated for literacy activities.

In the context of PAI learning, these internal barriers impact on students' ability to understand religious texts, such as Qur'anic verses or hadith, deeply and contextually. Low motivation prevents students from actively exploring the meaning of these texts, while a weak literacy culture limits their ability to integrate religious values with daily life. To overcome these challenges, there needs to be a synergy between internal and external approaches. From the internal side, PAI teachers should be able to integrate learning strategies that increase student motivation, such as using religious texts that are relevant to daily life or adopting a project-based learning approach to make students more actively involved. Such approaches can increase students' motivation while instilling a more positive reading culture. Meanwhile, from the external side, it is important to create a supportive literacy ecosystem, including the provision of quality reading materials, the development of faith-based digital content, and the integration of technology in PAI learning (Achmad Jalilul Chakam et al., 2023). Marmoah et al (2019) also emphasized the need to involve families and communities in literacy programs, such as through reading together or organizing community-based literacy programs. With these integrated efforts, internal barriers such as low motivation and a weak reading culture can be overcome more effectively so that students' literacy, both in general and religious aspects, can develop optimally.

3. **Selection and development of appropriate solutions in strengthening literacy in the learning system**

Regarding the selection and development of appropriate solutions in strengthening literacy in the learning system, this study found three essential things. Firstly, learning activities specifically designed to develop students' skills as a tool for literacy reinforcement showed that PAI teachers have developed various learning innovations to improve students' literacy skills. The methods used include problem-based learning, group discussions, and the utilization of technology such as Wordwall, Quizizz, and other online platforms. The use of these technologies not only serves as a learning medium but also as a means to improve students' digital literacy skills. Digital literacy, which includes the ability to access, understand and evaluate online information, is becoming increasingly important in today's information age. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), digital literacy has a strategic role. With the increase of religious information available online, students need the skills to sort out valid and relevant resources. Technology such as Quizizz, in addition to helping students understand PAI materials in an interactive way, can also be used to teach

critical skills in assessing the validity of religious information circulating on the internet. For example, online applications can be utilized to direct students to trusted sources, such as official digital tafsir, interactive Qur'an applications, or religious education portals managed by trusted institutions. This not only helps students expand their religious knowledge, but also builds awareness of the importance of using correct information in their daily religious practices.

This approach also allows teachers to integrate religious literacy and digital literacy. For example, teachers can design learning activities that involve analyzing online content, such as comparing commentaries from several platforms, identifying hoaxes related to religious information or finding Qur'an-based solutions to specific social issues discussed in class discussions. In this way, technology becomes not only a learning support tool, but also a strategic means to equip students with relevant digital literacy skills, especially in understanding and applying religious values in the digital era. This strengthens the relevance of Islamic Religious Education in shaping a young generation that is religious, critical and ready to face the challenges of global information. In addition, teachers also design project-based activities, such as interviews with community leaders, which provide contextualized learning experiences. The use of technology in learning, such as videos and interactive quizzes, has proven effective in improving students' understanding and motivation, as expressed by students who like the method because it is more fun and helps them understand the material better. School facilities, such as the library and reading corners in each classroom, also play an important role in supporting students' literacy by providing interesting and relevant reading materials. Students showed a preference for interactive and visual learning methods, such as games and quizzes, which increased their engagement in the learning process. This finding is reinforced by documentation of learning activities, such as the use of interactive quizzes through the Quizizz platform. In its implementation, PAI teachers use quizzes as an evaluation medium that not only measures students' understanding, but also increases their enthusiasm in learning.

Figure 2: Teacher uses quiz during learning

Figure 2. shows the classroom atmosphere when the teacher utilizes quizzes for learning. Students look active and engaged, enthusiastically competing to get the best score. This approach creates a learning atmosphere that is both fun and challenging, motivating students

to delve deeper into the material. The use of this technology-based quiz not only improves literacy skills, but also helps students develop critical and analytical thinking skills in learning Islamic Religious Education.

The second essential point of research findings shows that the utilization of regular learning time and moments of Islām religious celebrations contribute significantly to strengthening students' literacy. PAI teachers make use of the limited time in the Merdeka curriculum, which only provides 3 lesson hours, by integrating P5 (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila) and optimizing additional time outside of class hours (Marsela Yulianti et al., 2022). Routine literacy activities such as Wednesday literacy and Friday Spirituality, which involve dhuha prayer in congregation, recitation of the Qurʾān, asmaul husna, and Islamic art, are part of the school program. In addition, during the month of Ramaḍān, the flash pesantren (sanlat) activities become an intensive platform to improve students' literacy through various Islamic competitions, such as tahfidz, adhan, qasidah, and quizzing. The initiative of a district-wide distributed Ramaḍān book, which records various worship and learning activities during the holy month, also helped students develop their literacy skills. The findings show that religious celebration-based activities and school programs can enrich students' learning experiences, both in the religious context and in literacy development in general.

Figure 3. Islamic boarding school activities during the month of Ramaḍān

The third essential result shows that innovation and collaboration carried out by PAI teachers significantly improve performance in strengthening student literacy. PAI teachers actively engage in collaboration with fellow teachers and librarians through various platforms, such as the Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) Platform and the Teachers Working Group (KKG), which involves the exchange of knowledge, strategies, and resources to create a holistic learning environment. This collaboration is not only limited to within the school, but also involves other schools at the sub-district level, thus expanding its impact on education quality. PAI teachers also adopt various innovations in learning, such as the use of technology (Wordwall, Canva, YouTube, Quizizz) and variations in assessment methods to improve students' understanding and literacy skills. These innovations aim to provide a more diverse and comprehensive learning experience, both in the context of religion and

general knowledge. Overall, the findings reveal that with innovation and good collaboration, PAI teachers succeeded in creating a strong foundation for students' literacy development, as well as improving their understanding of religious values in the PAI curriculum.

Strengthening religious literacy in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is highly dependent on the application of innovative and adaptive methods to technological developments and student needs (Nurwanto & Rijalul Alam, 2018). The research findings show that the use of digital media such as Quizizz app and other learning platforms can significantly increase student engagement. The use of blended learning and flipped classroom methods also proved effective in facilitating independent and interactive learning, allowing students to access materials before class and develop deeper understanding through discussions (Destriani & Warsah, 2022). Collaboration between teachers, librarians and the community also plays an important role in enriching students' learning experiences, enabling them to acquire broader literacy, both in the context of religion and digital literacy (Husniyah et al., 2023). Moreover, strengthening religious literacy in PAI does not only focus on understanding religious texts, but also encourages the development of critical literacy that allows students to think reflectively about religious teachings and apply them in everyday life (Lubis et al., 2023).

The implications of strengthening religious literacy in PAI also include the formation of more mature and responsible student characters (Fahimatul Anis et al., 2023). Through an approach based on religious values and practical applications in social life, students can deepen their understanding of Islam while developing a thoughtful and civilized attitude (Ramadhani & Musyarapah, 2024). The application of discussion, question and answer and demonstration methods in religious learning not only enriches students' knowledge, but also hones their social skills and critical thinking. Learning that integrates religious, social and character aspects has a significant impact in shaping a generation that is able to face the challenges of the modern world more wisely and empathetically (Musyafak & Subhi, 2023).

4. **Implementation of PAI learning in strengthening student literacy**

With the implementation of Islām Religious Education (PAI) learning, this strategic step is expected to make a significant contribution in strengthening students' literacy, combining religious wisdom with critical and creative thinking skills. As the purpose of this research contained in the instrument. The research findings succeeded in obtaining two essential things, consisting of implementation actions and implementation goals.

First, the implementation action shows that PAI teachers have implemented various effective strategies in improving students' literacy through differentiated and adaptive approaches. By classifying students into groups based on their literacy levels (high, middle, low), PAI teachers can provide learning approaches that suit the needs of each individual. This step is supported by an in-depth understanding of the material, obtained through training, as well as the application of innovations in learning such as the use of technology, project-based learning, and the development of students' critical skills. In addition, PAI teachers also take advantage of special moments such as Ramadan to hold flash pesantren and competitions, which contribute to strengthening literacy. Curriculum modification is an important part of this strategy, giving teachers the flexibility to adjust learning materials to suit students' characteristics and abilities. Overall, the implementation strategies carried out by PAI teachers have contributed significantly to improving students' literacy and religious

understanding, reflecting their commitment and professionalism in supporting the education process. To support the aforementioned implementation strategies, the presence of facilities such as reading corners in the classroom also plays a significant role in improving students' literacy. The reading corner, which is equipped with various religious books, references and materials related to learning Islām, provides students with the opportunity to access information independently and broaden their horizons outside of formal learning (Hasanah & Sukri, 2023). The existence of this reading corner not only supports literacy learning technically, but also fosters students' interest in reading, thinking critically, and understanding more about religious teachings. This is one form of real effort that complements the literacy activities that have been carried out by PAI teachers, making the classroom a conducive environment for the development of students' religious literacy.

Gambar 4. Pojok yang disediakan di tiap kelas

Second, it shows that PAI teachers have succeeded in setting clear and directed goals in an effort to improve students' literacy, both in the context of Islām religious literacy and general literacy. The objectives, which focused on the introduction of the hijaiyah letters for grades 1-2, as well as the ability to read and understand the Qurʾān for upper grade students, reflected a structured effort in strengthening religious literacy competencies. In addition, PAI teachers also emphasize the importance of differentiated learning to meet students' individual needs, by classifying them based on ability levels and utilizing various learning modalities such as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. Despite the obstacles in fully implementing classical learning, PAI teachers succeeded in adjusting the learning content to suit students' diverse learning styles, ensuring that each student can develop according to his or her abilities. Collaboration between PAI teachers, parents and class teachers to learn about students' backgrounds also strengthens a more holistic approach in supporting students' literacy. Overall, these shared goals attest to the PAI Teachers' commitment in creating a supportive environment for improving students' literacy and religious understanding.

The implementation of Islām Religious Education (PAI) learning in strengthening students' literacy shows structured and innovative efforts from PAI teachers. By using differentiated learning strategies, PAI teachers are able to tailor materials to students' individual needs, as well as integrate technology and project-based learning to support their literacy (Ariany Katrin Suryaningtyas & Mukh Nursikin, 2024). Curriculum modification is one of the important steps in ensuring the diversity of students' abilities can be achieved,

allowing them to optimally master religious and general literacy. Collaboration between PAI teachers and parents is also key in strengthening literacy outside the school environment, with activities such as parenting programs and strengthening Quran literacy involving all parties (Zulaikhah, 2019) . Furthermore, this focused learning effort on religious understanding of Islām and general literacy not only includes reading skills, but also forms more critical and creative students, as expected in an integrated curriculum (Iqbal, 2019). Thus, this implementation has a broad positive impact on students' literacy development, both in the religious realm and in their daily lives, creating a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings and literacy values that are universal in nature (Nudin, 2020).

5. Evaluation of learning in strengthening student literacy

The research findings regarding learning evaluation in strengthening students' literacy show the importance of implementing planned and sustainable formative and summative assessments. PAI teachers regularly conduct evaluations through various methods, such as evaluation questions, Qurʾān memorization, and group work, to monitor students' academic progress. This allows teachers to provide constructive feedback and ensure learning objectives are achieved. If the objectives have not been achieved, additional assignments are given as a form of formative assessment to reinforce students' understanding. In addition, the school's education report card, which includes a comprehensive evaluation of learning outcomes, teaching-learning processes and school management, also contributes to monitoring students' literacy development.

SDN 249 Astanaanyar showed significant improvement in students' literacy skills based on the education report card, which includes mastery of literary and informational texts. This improvement was driven by effective teaching methods, an intensive reading and writing program and collaboration between teachers and parents. The findings illustrate that the integration of evaluation in learning, involving formative and summative assessments as well as report cards, provides a comprehensive picture of students' literacy progress and helps schools design more effective programs to support literacy skills development. As reinforcement, the following figure shows the results of the education report card of SDN 249 Astanaanyar. This image illustrates an evaluation of the quality of learning conducted in the school, with a focus on students' literacy skills.

Figure 5. Education report card of SDN 249 Astanaanyar

This Education Report Card shows that more than 70% of students have achieved the minimum literacy competencies, which is a positive result of effective teaching efforts and collaboration between teachers and parents.

Evaluation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a very important role in improving students' literacy. PAI teachers have implemented regular formative evaluations with various approaches, such as questions, memorizing the Qur'an and group work, to monitor students' academic progress. This formative assessment not only serves to measure literacy achievement but also as a means of providing constructive feedback. This allows teachers to respond immediately if a learning objective is not achieved, such as providing additional assignments for literacy reinforcement. This finding shows that PAI teachers have understood the importance of evaluation as a tool to improve the quality of learning, although there is still a gap between the efforts made and the desired results (Salam et al., 2022). In addition, authentic and performance-based assessment, which includes measurement of the learning process, provides a more comprehensive picture of students' literacy development. (Widiatsih et al., 2020).

Evaluation in PAI learning needs to be done thoroughly, not only assessing the final results such as the ability to read or memorize the Qur'an, but also paying attention to the learning process and the development of students' critical thinking skills. Formative and authentic assessments, for example by analyzing religious texts or reflecting on religious values in a social context, can provide a more complete picture of students' understanding (Ibadin et al., 2023) By using this kind of evaluation, teachers can assess students' development in more depth, while encouraging them to think critically and apply religious values in daily life. Effective evaluation also helps teachers design more relevant learning methods and motivates students to continue actively learning.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded five important things related to improving students' literacy through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SDN 249 Astanaanyar, Bandung. Firstly, mapping students' literacy problems allows teachers to understand in detail the literacy conditions of each student so that they can design more effective learning strategies. Secondly, the analysis of barriers in developing students' literacy skills highlights the importance of training, workshops and learning innovations for PAI teachers to overcome various challenges. Thirdly, PAI teachers have adopted significant innovations, such as responsive learning design, technology utilization and inter-teacher collaboration, to strengthen students' literacy. Fourthly, the integration of religious wisdom with critical and creative thinking skills helps PAI teachers in designing learning strategies that suit students' individual needs. Fifth, holistic and diverse evaluative practices show PAI teachers' awareness of the importance of constructive feedback in improving students' literacy in a sustainable manner.

This study provides significant implications for religious literacy theory by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that combines religious values, critical thinking skills and modern technology. For Islamic education practice, the findings underscore the need for collaboration and innovation in learning. As recommendations, PAI teachers are advised to continue developing their competencies through training and technology utilization, while policy makers can support through the allocation of special funds for religious literacy programs and increased access to digital-based learning resources. This research provides a solid foundation for the development of more innovative literacy strategies that are relevant to future educational needs.

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