Fostering Literacy Culture by Optimizing Reading Corner at Elementary School

[1] **Yunik Susanti,** [2] **Ita Kurnia, and** [3] **Diani Nurhajati**

[1,2,3]English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Nusantara PGRI Kediri, East Java, Indonesia.

[1]yuniksusanti@unpkediri.ac.id, itakurnia@unpkediri.ac.id, dianihamzah@unpkediri.ac.id

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[1,2,3]English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Nusantara PGRI Kediri East Java Indonesia.

Abstract: Literacy is not just the ability to read and write, it involves the ability to understand, engage, use, analyze and transform both written and spoken texts. Schools have an important role in building a literacy culture in schools. One of them is creating a literacy-friendly physical environment. Reading corner is an example of a physical environment that supports the development of a literacy culture at school. This study aimed to study the implementation of reading corner activities in order to foster literacy culture as applied in an elementary school and to identify the students' reaction to the activities in reading corners. This case study was carried out at Kaliombo elementary school Kediri. The data from school principals, teachers and students were gathered through interview, questionnaire and documentation. The data was analyzed using qualitative data analysis and percentage computation. The results showed that the literacy culture built in the reading corner was carried out in several ways: (a) composing a certain schedule for each class to read certain books and do activities in the reading corner; (b) providing interesting and varied new books to boost the students' interest in the reading corner; (c) creating literacy-related activities in reading corner. The study finds that students had positive reactions to the implementation of activities in the reading corner to foster literacy culture. This study also implied that the reading corner is worth developing in elementary school as it facilitates students with numerous activities that encourage the formation of a literacy culture.

Key words: literacy, literacy culture, reading corner, elementary school

Abstrak: *Literasi bukan sekedar kemampuan membaca dan menulis, namun melibatkan kemampuan memahami, terlibat, menggunakan, menganalisis, dan mentransformasikan teks tertulis dan lisan. Sekolah mempunyai peran penting dalam membangun budaya literasi di sekolah. Salah satunya adalah menciptakan lingkungan fisik yang ramah literasi. Pojok membaca merupakan salah satu contoh lingkungan fisik yang mendukung pengembangan budaya literasi di sekolah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti tentang pelaksanaan kegiatan pojok baca dalam rangka menumbuhkan budaya literasi yang diterapkan di sekolah dasar dan mengetahui reaksi siswa terhadap kegiatan pojok baca. Studi kasus ini dilakukan di SDN Kaliombo Kediri. Data dari kepala sekolah, guru dan siswa dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, angket dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan analisis data kualitatif dan prosentase. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya literasi yang dibangun di pojok baca dilakukan dengan beberapa cara: (a) menyusun jadwal tertentu setiap kelas membaca buku tertentu dan melakukan aktivitas di pojok baca; (b) menyediakan buku-buku baru yang menarik dan bervariasi untuk meningkatkan minat siswa terhadap pojok baca; (c) menciptakan kegiatan literasi di pojok baca. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa siswa memberikan reaksi positif terhadap pelaksanaan berbagai kegiatan di pojok baca. Penelitian ini menyiratkan bahwa sudut*

membaca layak dikembangkan di sekolah dasar karena memfasilitasi siswa dengan berbagai kegiatan yang mendorong terbentuknya budaya literasi.

Kata kunci: *literasi, budaya literasi, pojok baca, sekolah dasar*

INTRODUCTION

Literacy development is fundamental to a student's academic and personal development, especially in the early stages of education. Literacy is more than just the ability to read and write; it includes broader skills such as critical thinking, comprehension and the ability to work with a variety of texts. The level of educational attainment can be shown through the literacy level in the community. Literacy has a high correlation with educational achievement. The higher the literacy level, the better the educational achievement. The level of reading culture can be indicated by the Reading Literacy Activity Index (Alibaca Index). The 2018 Alibaca Index mapping indicated that the practice of engaging in reading within families, communities, and educational institutions remains low, reflected by an index score of 28.50. The access to reading resources in educational institutions and the community, particularly in libraries and reading parks, reflects an even lower index value of 23.09. Additionally, East Java province ranks among the 10 regions in Indonesia with the lowest literacy index, exhibiting three dimensions that fall below 50 percent: access, cultural, and alternative dimensions. The reading culture within East Java Province is notably weak. The Alibaca Index for East Java is merely 33.19, categorizing it as low category (Solihin et al. (2019). This condition shows the need for the literacy movement to be revived on a massive scale through providing access to reading and providing multimodal facilities through the support of technological devices to foster a reading culture, especially increasing the students' literacy skills at school.

Enhancing strategies in three environmental areas is crucial for improving literacy, specifically in text-rich settings, nurturing social atmospheres, and educational environments. These three elements are vital for fostering a culture of literacy, as emphasized by Beers, Beers, & Smith (2010). Developing a Text-Rich Environment in schools is an important part of developing a literacy culture in schools. A text-rich environment refers to a setting where children engage with different types of printed resources, such as signs, labeled activity areas, story walls, exhibits, labeled murals, bulletin boards, graphs and charts, poetry, and numerous other printed items. (Kadlic & Lesiak, 2003).

One of the strategies in developing a text-rich environment is by creating a reading corner. A reader corner is a dedicated space within the classroom or school library designed to invite students to explore books, engage with texts, and develop a love for reading. By incorporating culturally relevant literature, reader corners can help students connect with their cultural heritage, thereby reinforcing cultural resilience. These spaces can also introduce students to diverse perspectives, fostering an understanding and respect for other cultures, which is increasingly important in a globalized world. Previous studies revealed the benefits of reading corner; increase students' reading interest (Juliansyah & Rukmana, 2022; Qiftiyah, 2022; Nasarudin, 2024; Nurhutamah, et al., 2024); increase the intensity of students' reading time (Wijaya et al., 2022); develop students' cognitive ability, enthusiastic and motivation (Qiftiyah, 2022); develop students' creativity and independence (Efendi & Khusnaini, 2023).

The effectiveness of the reader corner is not primarily determined by its physical layout. As a result, the integration of these spaces into the larger educational framework—including teaching methods, student interaction, and reading material selection—is critical to their effectiveness. Optimizing reader corners requires a deliberate approach that takes into account a variety of elements, including students' interests, the diversity of available texts, and the encouragement of student-led activities. In addition to its educational benefits, cultivating a literacy culture is essential for the development of cultural resilience. Kirmayer et al. (2011) define cultural resilience as a community's ability to preserve and adapt its cultural identity and traditions in the face of difficulties and changes.

Literacy serves as a vital tool for preserving cultural knowledge, values, and narratives, which are essential components of a community's identity. When children are encouraged to engage with texts that reflect their cultural heritage, they develop a deeper connection to their roots and a greater appreciation for their cultural background. By promoting a literacy culture that is inclusive of diverse cultural narratives, schools can contribute to the development of cultural resilience in their students. This resilience is crucial for students to navigate and thrive in a rapidly changing world, where cultural identities are constantly challenged. The ability to maintain and adapt cultural practices through literacy not only empowers students but also strengthens the social fabric of their communities.

Previous studies on reading corners have focused on students' cognitive development through reading corners (Qiftiyah, 2020); increasing students' interest in reading through reading corners (Nasarudin, et al., 2024; Nurhutamah, 2024; Wijaya, et al., 2022); and the implementation of literacy culture management applied in elementary schools (Marmoah, et al., 2023). Further investigation is needed to address the knowledge gap on best practices on the practice of reading corner to improve literacy culture and how students perceive the benefits and effects of activities in reading corner that can improve their interest in reading. This article explores the importance of fostering a literacy culture in elementary schools through the optimization of reader corners activities. It examines how this space can be effectively utilized to cultivate reading habits, improve literacy culture and reinforce cultural resilience by integrating culturally relevant texts. By analyzing case studies, best practices, and theoretical frameworks, this study aims to provide educators and policymakers with insights into the successful implementation of reader corners as a tool for both literacy development and cultural preservation. Ultimately, the goal is to highlight the potential of this space to inspire a generation of readers who view literacy not just as a skill, but as a means of sustaining and enriching their cultural identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Literacy

Along with the development of science and technology the meaning of literacy has become broader. In simple terms, literacy was originally understood as the ability to read and write, in which reading can be interpreted as the process of translating language symbols until they are processed into meaning and writing is defined as expressing thoughts by carving out language symbols to form an understanding.

The concept of literacy evolved as a result of the contemporary expectation that pupils be able to adapt to a fast-changing world and actively engage in society. According to the International Literacy Association (2023), literacy is the ability to recognize, understand, interpret, produce, compute, and communicate about transdisciplinary and scientific themes utilizing visual, aural, and digital symbols. While, the Assessment and Learning Center of the Ministry of Education and Culture Book Research and Development Agency (2021) defined literacy as students' ability to understand, use, evaluate, and reflect on various types of texts to solve problems and develop individual capacity as Indonesian and global citizens so that they can contribute productively to society. According to UNESCO (2024), literacy has evolved beyond its traditional definition as a set of reading, writing, and counting skills to become a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich, and rapidly changing world.

Thus, literacy is inextricably linked to the ability of humans to employ a variety of resources to live a fulfilling life. So, literacy is not determined by topic or material knowledge. This is the minimal or basic competency required for kids to learn in a text-rich, socially successful, and academically supportive setting. Literacy is a lifelong process of learning and proficiency in reading, writing, and using numbers, and it is part of a larger set of abilities that includes digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship, as well as job-related skills. Literacy abilities are developing and evolving as people use digital technologies to access and learn more information.

B. Literacy Culture and Cultural Resilience

Given the importance of enhancing students' reading skills, a collaborative effort is required to build a literacy-focused culture. According to Jacobson (2017), literacy development does not occur at a specific moment or in a particular area of study. Literacy entails children and even family members participating in literary experiences not just during the school day, but also after school and in the community in non-mandatory ways. This means that increasing literacy necessitates a collaboration between schools and parents to foster an environment beyond reading instruction in which students, staff, and parents participate in continuing literacy activities.

We establish an environment that encourages students to develop reading habits so that, even after they leave school, they become lifelong readers. In order to encourage cultural literacy, literacy is incorporated into every aspect of the school environment, teachers demonstrate their own connections to books, and chances for students to use their skills and broaden their interests are created both inside and outside the classroom. This environment is created via ongoing collaboration between teachers from many disciplines.

In correlation to the cultural resilience, literacy culture prepared the students to the ability to adapt with the adversity of the global environment. Cultural resilience considers how cultural background (i.e., culture, cultural values, language, customs, norms) helps individuals and communities overcome adversity. The notion of cultural resilience suggests that individuals and communities can deal with and overcome adversity not just based on individual characteristics alone, but also from the support of larger sociocultural factors. Clauss-Ehlers (2010) described cultural resilience as how culture and sociocultural context influence resilient outcomes. This approach raises the question of whether broader environmental elements can assist individuals in overcoming the challenges they confront. According to culturally-focused resilient adaptation,

adaption to adversity is a dynamic process that encompasses character traits, a person's cultural heritage, values, and supportive parts of the sociocultural environment.

By promoting a literacy culture schools can contribute to the development of cultural resilience in their students. This resilience is crucial for students to navigate and thrive in a rapidly changing world, where cultural identities are constantly challenged. The ability to maintain and adapt cultural practices through literacy not only empowers students but also strengthens the social fabric of their communities.

C.   Reading Corner

One of the strategies in developing a text-rich environment is by creating a reading corner. A reader corner is a dedicated space within the classroom or school library designed to invite students to explore books, engage with texts, and develop a love for reading. The function of the reading corner is to support the idea that students become literate if they are exposed to a wide range of text materials and given opportunities to explore and experiment with books. If schools want students to have direct access to literary and non-literary texts, reading corners must be managed well.

A well-designed reading corner can significantly increase the number of students who engage in literary activities during recess. A study shows that there is the correlation between reading activity index and academic achievement (Agustina, 2021). Therefore, the more children have access to books, the more they read and the better readers they will become. A well-designed reading area can considerably boost the number of pupils who participate in literary activities at recess. A study found a link between reading activity index and academic achievement (Agustina, 2021). As a result, the more book youngsters have access to, the more they will read and improve their reading skills. A well-organized and visually appealing reading space can promote positive reading behaviour and routines. However, teachers were also instrumental in organizing and facilitating the activities in the reading nook. According to Juliansyah & Rukmana (2022), a growth in reading interest is not solely determined by the quality of the reading nook, but must also be accompanied by the teacher's role. These findings show that the implementation of the reading corner.

METHOD

A.   Type of Research

This research aims to investigate the implementation and the students' reaction about reading corner activities to foster literacy culture. A qualitative study that uses a case study method was used since this study focused on a single unit to produce an in-depth description focused on a particular phenomenon, situation, or event (Ary et al, 2010). The particular phenomena under study were about the implementation of reading corner to foster the literacy culture in elementary school and the students' reaction toward its implementation.

B.   Research Subjects

The subjects of this research were a school principal, teachers of the fifth and sixth class, 28 students from fifth class and 29 students from sixth class of SDN 1 Kaliombo Kediri. The reason for having students from class fifth and sixth was because those classes were in higher

level of elementary students. The school principal and two teachers as classroom teachers of fifth and sixth class were decided as the participants because they were the agents of the implementation activities of the program at this school.

C.   Research Procedure

Data were collected through several techniques, including interviews, observation and documentation and questionnaire.

1.   Interview

Guided interview was used in this study as the topic or area of the interview questions were written based on the indicators to learn more about the implementation of the reading corner to foster literacy culture. There were four indicators to collect data on the implementation of the reading corner. First indicator was about the conditions; with three sub indicators. The second indicator was about book collection; with three sub-indicators. The third indicator was about activities; with three sub-indicators. The last indicator was about value; with three sub-indicators. In total there were twelve questions in this interview. The instrument was sent to teachers, school principal and students. The method used for interviewing is guided interviewing. Guided interviewing focuses on the topic or area of the interview. Table 1 shows the indicator and sub-indicators of the interview questions.

Table 1:
Interview Guidance for the Implementation of Reading Corner to Foster Literacy Culture

No	Indicator	Sub-indicator
1.	Condition	a. Reading Space b. Material c. Place
2	Book Collection	a. Texts Variation b. Book Rotation c. Rules
3.	Activities	a. Book-related Activities b. Reading Journal c. Listening Story
4	Value	a. Independent b. Reading Habituation c. Critical Thinking

2.   Documentation

A document study was carried out to get the administrative traces in the form of photos or documents regarding the implementation of reading corner to promote literacy culture. The researchers received documentation in the form of pictures of the activities done in reading corner.

3.   Questionnaire

Closed-ended questionnaire with three-option Linkert scale; agree, neutral and disagree, was used to get the data about the students' reaction about the implementation of reading corner

activities to develop literacy culture. Students from the fifth and sixth grade were the respondents. The total of the respondents was forty-seven students. This type of questionnaire was used to eliminates ambiguity and potential bias in the process of data collection. The four indicators about the students' reaction for the questionnaire namely; attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction were adopted from Muhlisin (2017 as cited in Muhlisin, 2018). Table 2 shows the indicators and questions for the closed-ended questionnaire:

Table 2:
Questionnaire for Students' Reaction

No	Indicators	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1.	Attention	a. I am interested to read in reading corner b. I can concentrate when reading in the reading corner			
2.	Relevance	a. I enjoy doing activities related to reading in the reading corner b. I like going to the reading corner because the books I read in the reading corner suit my interests			
3.	Confidence	a. I enjoy reading because there is a reading corner at school b. I have become accustomed to reading anywhere because there is a reading corner at school			
4.	Satisfaction	a. I am happy with the reading corner facilities at school b. I like the collection of books in the reading corner			

4.   Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis in this research adopted Miles & Huberman's (1994) interactive model starting from data reduction, data display, to drawing conclusion. This analysis was used to analyzed the data obtained from interview and documentation. The processes are described as below. First, data reduction was a selection process, focusing, simplifying, grouping, and transforming the raw data from the field reports. Second, data display presented the data in form of narrative text, graph, or diagram systematically and easy to understand, then it leads to the conclusion. Miles & Huberman (1994) limit the data display as the information/data arranged that can lead to a conclusion. Third, drawing conclusion is a complete con activity. This process aims to obtain the meaning of the data collected by finding similarities and differences to conclude the answer to the problem that existed. The conclusion was also verified during the research. After the data was displayed and described, this research obtained the answer to the problem. Then, from the answer, this research can create a general conclusion and can generalize the research results. For the data obtained from questionnaire, descriptive statistical analysis using percentage computation was used. This computation aimed to provide an overview of the students' reaction toward the implementation of reading corner to foster literature culture, not to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study provide data on the implementation of activities in reading corner to foster literacy culture and the students' reaction toward the implementation of the program.

A.   The Implementation of Reading Corner Activities to Foster Literacy Culture

The data about the implementation of reading corner activities were got from interview and documentation. The results were presented based on the indicators of the area of the interview and supported with documentation analysis. The questions were asked to the teachers and the students' representative. The first finding was about the condition of the reading corner.
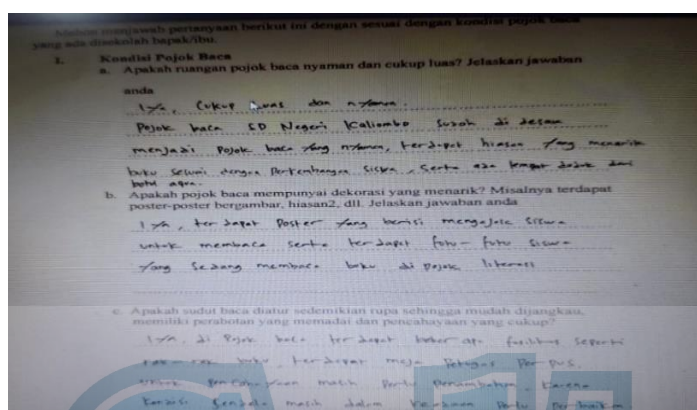

Figure 1:
Teachers' answer about the condition of reading corner

The teacher stated that the reading corner was spacy and comfortable completed with interesting decoration. There were some posters and photos to campaign reading movement. This reading corner furnished with small chair, table, soft carpet and book shelves. Well-organized attractive reading corner can significantly increase the number of students who engage in literary activities during recess and encourage good reading behavior and habits. Juliansyah & Rukmana (2022). Figure 2 presents the condition of the reading corner.

Figure 2:
The condition of the reading corner

From the picture above we can observe that there was effort to recycled some material found in the environment to build reading corner, such as the gate that was made from recycled mineral water bottle, the decoration also made from the material that were easily got from local environment.

The second finding was about the book collection. Figure 3 showed the teacher answer for the questions about the book collection:
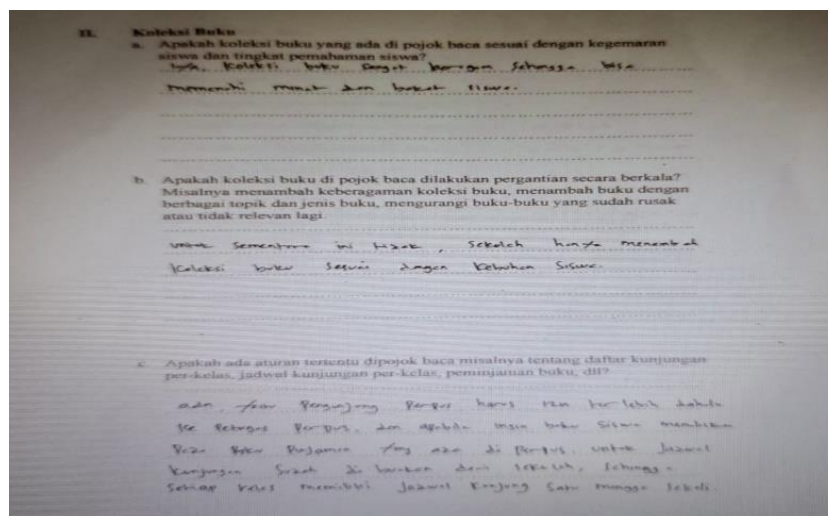

Figure 3:
Teachers' answer for the book collection in the reading corner

The teacher explained that there was various book available in the book corner that were suitable with the students' level and interest. Another teacher added that the collection of the book included story book, general knowledge book and child magazines. The corners in with a collection of storybooks and supporting textbooks (Wulanjani & Anggraeni, 2019). The students also stated that they could get various reading material in book corner easy and they can choose the book that were suitable with their interest and level. Figure 4 shows some collection of the books in reading corner.

Figure 4:
Book collection in the reading corner

Although the collection of the book was various, there hasn't been any rotation of the book collection, school principal stated that the school have added the collection of the book regularly but they haven't sorted any book that was old or out of date. For the rule in the use of reader corner there was certain schedule for each class to visit the reading corner, so the students can make use of this facilities regularly. There was also regulation to borrow the book collection.

The third finding was about the activities in the reading corner. Figure 5 shows the students answer for the various activities they did in the reading corner.
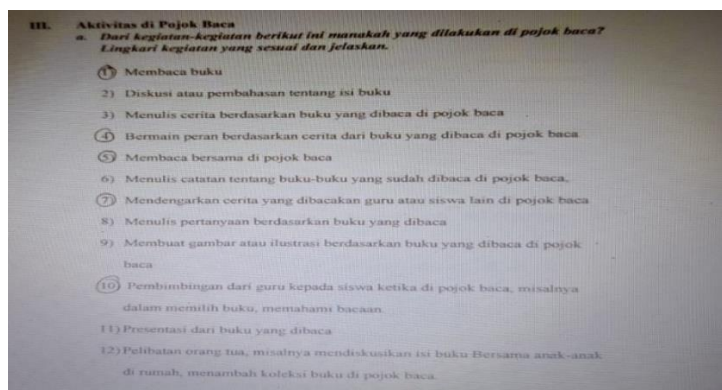

Figure 5:
Students' activities in the reading corner

From the data above we can observe that in the reading corner the students did the activities individually or under the teacher guidance. Teachers must be facilitators and motivators for students in reading activities. In implementing reading corner activities, teachers are advised to carry out three activity stages: habituation, development, and literacy-based learning (Wijaya et. al (2022). In the reading corner they read book by themselves and reading together. They did role play based on the book they read and also listening to the story read by the teacher or by their friends. Nasarudin (2024) said that the other effort to maximize the potential of assets is by creating a reading corner and activities that can attract students' interest in reading, such as literacy educational games, adding trilingual vocabulary and ice breaking related to literacy education.

The teacher's guidance in the reading corner activities appeared in reading together and book selection activities. The increase in reading interest is not dominantly influenced by the quality of the reading corner itself, but must be accompanied by the role of the teacher. These results indicate that the implementation of the reading corner program in schools is not only physically present but also must be supported by the role of the teacher (Juliansyah & Rukmana, 2022). Figure 6 presents example of the students' teacher activities.

Figure 6:
The students' activities in the reading corner under teacher supervision

Fourth finding was about the value that the students' developed from the activities in the reading corner. Figure 7 presents student answer about value they obtain.
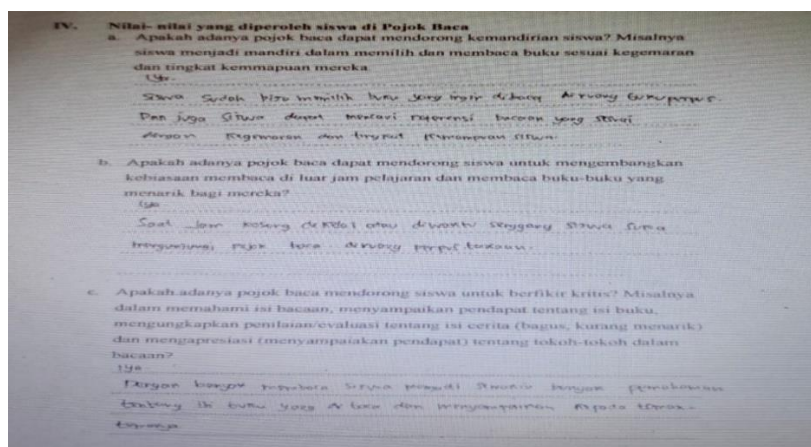

Figure 7:
Values students developed in the reading corner activities

From Figure 7 we can infer that they student can develop their independence on selecting their favorite book to read, finding references to finish their tasks, and finding answer for their lesson. Their reading habituation also developed by reading in their rest or off class hour. They liked going to the reading corner without any instruction from their teacher. They also stated that they were more confident to do presentation or talking in front of the class. Reading corner had an influence on students' creativity and independence. Reading corner really help teachers to get students used to being active and developing their thinking abilities, knowing the direction and goals of their learning so they don't depend on the teacher (Efendi & Khusnaini, 2023).

B.   The Students' Reaction toward the Implementation of Reading Corner Activities to Promote Literacy Culture

The result of the questionnaire showed that in general students have positive reaction toward the activities done in reading corner. In each categories had greater value on agree option. Based on the results presented in table 3, the relevance aspect is the highest average with an average of 92%. The satisfaction aspect with an average 90% at the second, confidence aspect with an average 83.5% at the third and the lowest was attention aspect with an average 87%. It means the activities and the collection of the books in the reading corner were suitable and relate to the students' interest and ability

Table 3:
Questionnaire Result about the Students' Reaction toward the Implementation of the Reading Corner Activities

No	Indicators	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1.	Attention	a. I am interested to read in reading corner	42 (90%)	5 (10%)	0 0%
		b. I can concentrate when reading in the reading corner	40 (85%)	5 (12%)	1 (3%)

2.	Relevance	a. I enjoy doing activities related to reading in the reading corner	42 (88%)	4 (9%)	1 (3%)
		b. I like going to the reading corner because the books I read in the reading corner suit my interests	45 (96%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
3.	Confidence	a. I enjoy reading because there is a reading corner at school	37 (79%)	7 (14%)	3 (7%)
		b. I have become accustomed to reading anywhere because there is a reading corner at school	42 (88%)	4 (9%)	1 (3%)
4.	Satisfaction	a. I am happy with the reading corner facilities at school	42 (89%)	5 (11%)	0 (0%)
		b. I like the collection of books in the reading corner	42 (90%)	5 (10%)	0 (0%)

A fun reading corner activity as an effort to implement literacy reading movements could develop cognitive abilities of students, including students doing assimilation, and accommodation processes to achieve equilibration, and students are more enthusiastic and motivated to increase their reading interest (Qiftiyah, 2022). Furthermore, students became accustomed to reading anywhere as they often go to reading corner at school. This means that school literacy culture can be cultivated through the utilization of reading corners on student interest in reading (Nurhutamah et al. 2024).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that literacy culture can be developed in the implementation of activities in reading corner. The activities that support the literacy culture such as reading individually or in group, reading under teacher' supervision or not, conducting literacy-related activities (e.g. role play, listening story). By carrying out the activities in the reading corner the students get accustomed to reading not only at the reading corner but also anywhere, they enjoyed doing reading-related activities, they were more independent in choosing their reading materials, and have reading habituation. The activities that are still lacking in this reading corner are literacy-related activities that involve parents.

The students' positive reactions to the reading corner activities indicate that they were appropriate for development in elementary school. The activities and book collection were relevant to the students' interests and needs, they captured the students' attention, and they also enhanced the students' confidence in reading.

To conduct effective reading corner activities so the literacy culture can be developed, research suggested the following: schools should develop the activities at reading corner by conducting various book-related activities; promote students' reading habituation by making certain schedule for the students' to read and do activities in reading corner; add and rotate the books collection in reading corner; and encourage students develop their reading habit by being active in reading corner and out of school; manage parents' support to collab with the school to foster students' literacy related activities. Further research on efforts to foster cultural literacy at school, covering boarder range of subjects, is demanded in order to obtain more comprehensive results.

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