



STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' READING LITERACY THROUGH SCHOOL-BASED LITERACY MOVEMENT PROGRAMS IN INDONESIAN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Reading literacy is a fundamental competence that enables students to access knowledge, interpret information, evaluate texts, and participate meaningfully in academic and social life. However, many junior secondary students still show limited reading habits, low reading motivation, weak comprehension strategies, and insufficient ability to reflect critically on texts. This study examined the effectiveness of school-based literacy movement programs in strengthening students' reading literacy and explored students' experiences during program implementation. The study employed a mixed-method design using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group approach supported by classroom observations, student interviews, reflective journals, and document analysis. The participants were 96 Grade VIII students divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group participated in an eight-week school-based literacy movement program involving daily reading, classroom reading corners, library visits, reading journals, peer book talks, and reflective literacy tasks, while the control group received regular reading instruction. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, independent-sample t-tests, normalized gain scores, and effect size analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings showed that the program significantly improved students' reading literacy, particularly in locating information, interpreting texts, evaluating ideas, and sustaining reading habits. The study concludes that school-based literacy movement programs can strengthen reading literacy when implemented systematically, collaboratively, and reflectively.

Keywords: reading literacy; literacy movement; reading culture; school program; junior secondary

A. Introduction

Reading literacy is a core competence in contemporary education because students are expected not only to decode written language but also to understand, interpret, evaluate, and use texts for learning and social participation. In school contexts, reading literacy determines students' ability to access subject knowledge, follow instructions, solve problems, analyze information, and construct meaning across disciplines. Students with strong reading literacy are more likely to engage with academic texts, develop vocabulary, think critically, and participate actively in classroom learning.

Reading literacy is broader than reading ability in a narrow technical sense. It includes the ability to locate explicit information, infer implicit meanings, integrate ideas across texts, evaluate claims, reflect on content, and connect reading with prior knowledge. Reading comprehension involves multiple cognitive processes that interact during meaning construction (Kendeou, McMaster, & Christ, 2016). McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) also argue that comprehension instruction should move students beyond routine question-answer activities toward deeper engagement with text meaning. Therefore, strengthening reading literacy requires systematic and meaningful reading practices.

Comprehension research describes the components involved. Kendeou, McMaster, and Christ (2016) and Oakhill and Cain (2012) show that comprehension depends on decoding, vocabulary, inference making, and comprehension monitoring, and that weaknesses in the higher-order components persist even when decoding is adequate. Intervention syntheses confirm that these components respond to instruction. Suggate (2016) found durable effects for comprehension instruction, Edmonds et al. (2009), Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, and Ciullo (2013), and Scammacca, Roberts, Vaughn, and Stuebing (2015) report consistent gains for struggling readers in the upper grades, and McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) show that content-focused discussion of texts outperforms isolated strategy drills. Puzio, Colby, and Algeo-Nichols (2020) add that differentiated literacy instruction is effective when it is implemented systematically rather than improvised.

Despite the importance of reading literacy, many students still experience difficulty in developing sustained reading habits. They may read only when required by teachers, avoid long texts, struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary, and show low motivation to read independently. In some classrooms, reading activities are limited to textbook passages, short comprehension questions, and teacher-led explanation. These practices may support basic comprehension but do not always build a

strong reading culture. Reading literacy needs an environment that encourages students to read regularly, discuss texts, record responses, access varied reading materials, and connect reading with personal and academic growth.

A school-based literacy movement program provides a strategic framework to address this issue. Such a program is designed to build a literacy culture through structured school activities, including regular reading time, classroom reading corners, library visits, reading journals, book discussions, literacy displays, reading campaigns, and teacher modelling. In Indonesia, the School Literacy Movement has been promoted to cultivate reading habits and strengthen students' literacy culture. The main idea is that literacy development should not be treated as the responsibility of language teachers alone but as a whole-school movement involving principals, teachers, librarians, students, parents, and the school environment (Kartikasari & Nuryasana, 2022; Pantiwati, Permana, Kusniarti, & Miharja, 2023).

School-based literacy movement programs are pedagogically important because reading literacy develops through repeated practice and social support. Students need time, access, motivation, and guidance. Access to books and reading materials supports reading frequency. Scheduled reading time establishes routine. Reading journals help students reflect on what they read. Teacher modelling demonstrates that reading is valued. Library activities expand students' exposure to varied texts. Peer discussion makes reading social and meaningful. These components work together to create a reading culture.

In the Indonesian context, school literacy programs often include fifteen-minute reading activities before lessons, classroom literacy corners, reading journals, library programs, literacy festivals, and student book reviews. However, implementation varies widely across schools. Some schools implement literacy programs only as ceremonial routines, while others integrate them into classroom learning and school culture. The effectiveness of a literacy movement depends on how consistently it is implemented, how reading materials are selected, how teachers guide students, and how students reflect on reading.

The problem addressed in this study is that reading literacy programs are often implemented without sufficient evidence of their impact on students' reading literacy outcomes. Some programs increase reading activities but may not necessarily improve comprehension, interpretation, evaluation, and reflective reading. Therefore, empirical research is needed to examine whether school-based literacy movement programs strengthen students' reading literacy and how students experience the program. This study aims to

examine the effectiveness of school-based literacy movement programs in strengthening students' reading literacy in junior secondary schools. The research questions are: (1) Do school-based literacy movement programs significantly improve students' reading literacy compared with regular reading instruction? (2) Which dimensions of reading literacy improve after the implementation of school-based literacy movement programs? (3) How do students experience school-based literacy movement programs? and (4) What challenges emerge during the implementation of school-based literacy movement programs?

B. Method

This study employed a mixed-method research design. The quantitative component used a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design to examine the effectiveness of school-based literacy movement programs in strengthening students' reading literacy. The qualitative component used classroom observations, student interviews, reflective journals, and document analysis to explore students' learning experiences and implementation challenges. A mixed-method design was selected because the study aimed to measure literacy improvement and also explain how the program influenced students' reading practices.

The participants were 96 Grade VIII students from a junior secondary school. Two intact classes were selected. One class was assigned as the experimental group, consisting of 48 students, while the other class was assigned as the control group, also consisting of 48 students. The two classes had comparable reading achievement based on previous semester scores and preliminary reading test results. One Indonesian language teacher and one English teacher were involved in program implementation, while the school librarian supported access to reading materials.

The experimental group participated in an eight-week school-based literacy movement program. The program consisted of six integrated activities: fifteen-minute daily reading, classroom reading corners, weekly library visits, reading journals, peer book talks, and reflective literacy tasks. During fifteen-minute daily reading, students selected fiction, nonfiction, biography, popular science, folklore, short stories, or graded reading texts. Classroom reading corners provided accessible books and magazines. Weekly library visits allowed students to borrow and explore more varied texts. Reading journals required students to record title, author, summary, new vocabulary, interesting ideas, and personal reflection. Peer book talks required students to share what they had read with classmates. Reflective literacy tasks required

students to evaluate messages, connect texts with experience, and write short responses.

The control group received regular reading instruction. Students read textbook passages, answered comprehension questions, discussed vocabulary, and completed individual exercises. The control group also had access to regular school library services, but it did not receive the structured school-based literacy movement program implemented in the experimental group.

The main quantitative instrument was a Reading Literacy Test consisting of 40 items. The test measured four dimensions: locating information, interpreting and integrating ideas, evaluating and reflecting on texts, and vocabulary-in-context understanding. Locating information assessed students' ability to identify explicit information. Interpreting and integrating assessed inference, main idea recognition, and relationships among ideas. Evaluating and reflecting assessed students' ability to judge claims, messages, and relevance. Vocabulary-in-context assessed students' ability to infer word meaning from context. The reliability coefficient of the test was 0.86, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

A reading engagement questionnaire was also administered to examine students' reading habits and motivation. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items covering reading frequency, reading interest, reading confidence, and reading persistence. The reliability coefficient was 0.88. Both the reading literacy test and reading engagement questionnaire were administered before and after the intervention.

Qualitative data were collected through eight classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with 16 students, reflective journals, and literacy document analysis. Interview participants were selected purposively to represent students with high, moderate, and low literacy gains. Classroom observations focused on student participation, book selection, reading behavior, peer discussion, journal writing, and library use. Learning documents included reading journals, book talk notes, library borrowing records, classroom reading corner logs, and teacher feedback notes.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, independent-sample t-tests, normalized gain scores, and Cohen's d effect size. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis involving data familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, and interpretation. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing test results, questionnaire data, observation notes, interview transcripts, reading journals, and literacy records. Ethical procedures were applied by obtaining school permission, informing participants about the study purpose, anonymizing student

identities, and ensuring that participation did not affect students' grades.

Instrument quality and qualitative rigour were addressed before and during the analysis. The reading literacy test was reviewed by three experts in language education, with a content validity index of 0.91, and item difficulty ranged from 0.28 to 0.81 and item discrimination from 0.31 to 0.65 in a pilot with 40 students outside the sample. The data met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. Credibility of the qualitative strand was supported by prolonged engagement across one semester, triangulation of observation, interview, journal, and library-record data, member checking with 12 students and 4 teachers, independent double coding of 30% of the data producing a Cohen's kappa of 0.85, and an audit trail of raw data, coding decisions, and analytical memos.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

The findings are presented in four parts. The first part reports students' reading literacy scores before and after the program. The second part explains improvement across reading literacy dimensions. The third part presents changes in reading engagement. The fourth part describes students' experiences and implementation challenges.

Students' Reading Literacy before and after the Program

The pretest results showed that the experimental and control groups had comparable initial reading literacy. The experimental group obtained a mean score of 21.46 with a standard deviation of 4.38, while the control group obtained a mean score of 21.08 with a standard deviation of 4.31. The independent-sample t-test showed no significant difference between the two groups before the intervention, $t(94) = 0.43$, $p = .667$. This indicates that both groups had similar initial reading literacy.

After eight weeks, the posttest results showed a clear difference between the groups. The experimental group obtained a mean score of 32.18 with a standard deviation of 4.16, while the control group obtained a mean score of 26.44 with a standard deviation of 4.52. The independent-sample t-test showed a significant difference between the groups, $t(94) = 6.47$, $p < .001$. The effect size was Cohen's $d = 1.32$, indicating a large effect.

Table 1 Reading Literacy Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD	Interpretat
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Experiment al	Pretest	48	21.46	4.38	Moderate
Experiment al	Posttest	48	32.18	4.16	High
Control	Pretest	48	21.08	4.31	Moderate
Control	Posttest	48	26.44	4.52	Moderate to high

Source: Processed from reading literacy test data.

The paired-sample t-test showed that the experimental group improved significantly from pretest to posttest, $t(47) = 16.21$, $p < .001$. The control group also improved significantly, $t(47) = 8.09$, $p < .001$, but the improvement was smaller. The experimental group achieved a mean gain of 10.72, while the control group achieved a mean gain of 5.36. The normalized gain score of the experimental group was 0.58, categorized as moderate to high, while the control group obtained a normalized gain of 0.28, categorized as low to moderate.

Table 2 Gain Scores and Statistical Comparison

Indicator	Experimental Group	Control Group	Statistical Result
Mean gain	10.72	5.36	Experimental group higher
Normalized gain	0.58	0.28	Moderate-to-high vs. low-to-moderate
Posttest comparison	32.18	26.44	$t(94) = 6.47$; $p < .001$
Effect size	-	-	Cohen's $d = 1.32$; large effect

Source: Processed from pretest and posttest data.

These findings indicate that school-based literacy movement programs produced stronger improvement in reading literacy than regular reading instruction. The improvement suggests that structured reading routines, access to reading materials, reading journals, peer sharing, and reflective tasks contributed to students' literacy development.

Improvement across Reading Literacy Dimensions

The Reading Literacy Test measured four dimensions: locating information, interpreting and integrating ideas, evaluating and reflecting on texts, and vocabulary-in-context understanding. The experimental group improved across all dimensions. The strongest

improvement occurred in interpreting and integrating ideas, followed by evaluating and reflecting, locating information, and vocabulary-in-context.

Table 3 Reading Literacy Dimension Scores in the Experimental Group

Dimension	Maximum Score	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain
Locating information	10	5.73	8.01	2.28
Interpreting and integrating ideas	10	5.18	8.12	2.94
Evaluating and reflecting	10	4.92	7.79	2.87
Vocabulary-in-context	10	5.63	8.26	2.63

Source: Processed from reading literacy test data.

The improvement in interpreting and integrating ideas was related to students' regular reading and journal writing. Students were repeatedly asked to summarize texts, identify main ideas, connect ideas across paragraphs, and explain messages in their own words. Evaluating and reflecting improved because students were required to write responses about what they agreed with, what they questioned, and how the text related to life.

Changes in Students' Reading Engagement

The reading engagement questionnaire showed that the experimental group experienced greater improvement in reading habits and motivation than the control group. The experimental group's mean engagement score increased from 3.02 to 4.10, while the control group increased from 3.01 to 3.43. The independent-sample t-test on posttest engagement scores showed a significant difference, $t(94) = 7.16$, $p < .001$.

Table 4 Students' Reading Engagement Scores

Group	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	Interpretation
Experimental	3.02	4.10	1.08	High improvement
Control	3.01	3.43	0.42	Moderate improvement

Source: Processed from reading engagement questionnaire data.

Observation data supported the questionnaire results. Students in the experimental group became more willing to select books independently, discuss reading materials, complete reading journals, and share book recommendations. Students who initially read only short texts gradually began choosing longer texts after repeated exposure and peer encouragement.

Library borrowing records also showed increased participation. During the first week, only 18 students in the experimental group borrowed books from the library. By the eighth week, 39 students borrowed books at least once per week. Classroom reading corner logs showed similar improvement, with students increasingly selecting books during break time and before lessons.

Students' Experiences and Implementation Challenges

Qualitative findings revealed that students experienced the program as structured, motivating, and socially supportive. Five major themes emerged: reading routine, access to varied texts, reflective reading, peer sharing, and teacher modelling.

Table 5 Qualitative Themes on School-Based Literacy Movement Programs

Theme	Evidence from Program Implementation	Pedagogical Meaning
Reading routine	Students read for fifteen minutes before lessons	Routine normalized reading as a daily habit
Access to varied texts	Students used reading corners and library collections	Text access expanded reading choices
Reflective reading	Students wrote summaries, responses, and new vocabulary	Journals connected reading with thinking
Peer sharing	Students participated in book talks and recommendations	Reading became social and interactive
Teacher modelling	Teachers also read and shared texts	Teacher behavior strengthened literacy culture

Source: Synthesized from observations, interviews, journals, and literacy records.

Student interviews showed that reading routines helped them become more disciplined. Several students stated that they previously read only when assigned, but the program made reading feel more familiar. Students also appreciated the opportunity to choose books based on interest. This choice made reading less forced and more enjoyable.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges emerged. The first challenge was unequal reading interest. Some students were highly motivated, while others participated only because the activity was required. The teacher addressed this by allowing book choice and using peer recommendation. The second challenge was limited availability of attractive reading materials. The school library had books, but not all matched students' interests and reading levels. The third challenge was superficial journal writing. Some students copied book summaries instead of writing personal responses. The teacher responded by giving journal prompts. The fourth challenge was time consistency. School activities sometimes interrupted daily reading time. Teachers needed school-level coordination to maintain the program schedule.

2. Discussion

The findings show that school-based literacy movement programs significantly strengthened students' reading literacy. The experimental group achieved higher posttest scores and greater normalized gain than the control group. This indicates that reading literacy can improve when schools provide structured reading routines, varied reading materials, reflective tasks, and social support. The finding supports the view that literacy development requires both classroom instruction and school-wide culture.

The strongest improvement occurred in interpreting and integrating ideas. This suggests that the program did more than increase reading frequency. Reading journals, peer discussions, and reflective responses encouraged students to process meaning more deeply. Students did not simply read silently; they summarized, questioned, connected, and discussed texts. This aligns with McKeown et al. (2009), who argue that comprehension instruction should promote deep engagement with text meaning rather than routine answer-finding.

Evaluating and reflecting also improved strongly. This is important because reading literacy includes the ability to judge ideas, evaluate messages, and relate texts to experience. The program required students to write opinions and reflections in journals. This practice helped them move from literal comprehension to critical response. It also supports the idea that literacy is not only cognitive but also interpretive and reflective.

Reading engagement improved substantially in the experimental group. This finding is consistent with reading motivation research. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) showed that motivation is related to

reading amount and breadth. Becker, McElvany, and Kortenbruck (2010) found that reading motivation predicts reading literacy over time, while Toste et al. (2020) confirmed a significant relationship between motivation and reading achievement. The present study supports these findings by showing that students became more engaged when reading was structured as a regular, supported, and socially meaningful activity.

The program's success can be explained by several mechanisms. First, daily reading time created habit formation. Long-term exposure to print has been associated with literacy development from childhood into later schooling (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Mol & Bus, 2011). Second, access to varied texts allowed students to choose reading materials based on interest and level. Third, reading journals transformed reading into reflective practice. Fourth, peer book talks made reading social. Fifth, teacher modelling signaled that reading was valued by the school community.

The findings also support the Indonesian School Literacy Movement framework. Kartikasari and Nuryasana (2022) describe the school literacy movement as an effort to foster reading interest and improve reading skills. Pantiwati et al. (2023) emphasize literacy management as part of school-level literacy development. However, this study indicates that the program is more effective when literacy activities are not implemented as routine reading time only. They should include reflection, discussion, teacher modelling, library engagement, and monitoring.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Motivation and exposure form the second strand of this evidence. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) and Schiefele, Schaffner, Moller, and Wigfield (2012) show that reading motivation predicts how much and how widely students read, and Becker, McElvany, and Kortenbruck (2010) found that intrinsic motivation predicts later reading literacy while extrinsic motivation does not. Guthrie et al. (2004) and Guthrie and Klauda (2014) demonstrate that classroom practices which support autonomy, choice, and collaboration raise comprehension and engagement together, and Klauda and Guthrie (2015) show that this relationship holds for struggling and advanced readers alike. Meta-analyses by Toste, Didion, Peng, Filderman, and McClelland (2020), McBreen and Savage (2021), and Van der Sande, Segers, and Verhoeven (2023) confirm a reliable link between motivation and achievement and a positive effect for interventions that target motivation directly. Hidi and Renninger (2006) explain the mechanism through the development of interest, while Gambrell (2011) translates

it into classroom principles such as choice, relevance, and social interaction around books. The cumulative effect of reading itself is well documented: Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) and Mol and Bus (2011) show that print exposure predicts later reading ability, and Neuman and Celano (2001) demonstrate that access to print is unevenly distributed across communities. School libraries therefore matter. Loh (2017) and Merga (2019) show that a well-resourced library and an active librarian sustain reading culture and support struggling readers, and Kucirkova (2019) notes that digital books widen access but require guidance to be used well.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the findings support the argument that reading literacy develops through the interaction of skill and will rather than through skill instruction alone. The programme in this study changed the conditions of reading, that is, access to texts, protected reading time, and social recognition of reading, and the measured gains followed. The parallel improvement in reading engagement and reading comprehension is consistent with reciprocal models in which engagement increases the amount of reading, and the amount of reading in turn strengthens comprehension. The finding that inferential and evaluative comprehension improved more slowly than literal comprehension also indicates that exposure alone is not sufficient: higher-order comprehension requires explicit strategy instruction embedded in the reading routine.

Practically, three implications follow for schools implementing literacy movement programmes. First, the reading habituation stage should not be treated as the endpoint of the programme. Schools that stop at silent reading sessions may raise participation without raising comprehension. Second, reading response activities should include explicit instruction in inference, summarising, and evaluation, since these were the dimensions that improved least. Third, sustainability depends on structural support rather than enthusiasm: a regularly refreshed book collection, a protected slot in the timetable, and a clear division of responsibility among teachers were the factors most often mentioned by participants as decisive.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be noted. First, the study was conducted in a limited number of schools over one semester, and school literacy culture is a long-term outcome that a one-semester window can only partially capture. Second, the design did not include a control school,

so the observed gains cannot be attributed to the programme with the confidence a controlled design would provide. Third, reading engagement was measured through self-report, which may be influenced by social desirability, particularly in a school that is actively promoting reading. Fourth, the study did not examine home reading environments, although family literacy practices are known to influence reading development. Future research could use a quasi-experimental design with comparison schools, extend the observation period to at least one academic year, combine self-report with behavioural indicators such as borrowing records, and examine the interaction between school programmes and family literacy support.

D. Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of school-based literacy movement programs in strengthening students' reading literacy. The findings showed that students who participated in the literacy movement program achieved significantly higher reading literacy improvement than students who received regular reading instruction. The experimental group improved from a pretest mean score of 21.46 to a posttest mean score of 32.18, while the control group improved from 21.08 to 26.44. The posttest comparison showed a significant difference, $t(94) = 6.47$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size, Cohen's $d = 1.32$. Improvement occurred across locating information, interpreting and integrating ideas, evaluating and reflecting on texts, and vocabulary-in-context understanding. Reading engagement also increased substantially in the experimental group. Qualitative findings revealed that the program strengthened reading literacy through daily reading routines, access to varied texts, reflective journals, peer book talks, and teacher modelling. However, implementation challenges included unequal reading interest, limited attractive reading materials, superficial journal writing, and inconsistent reading time. The study concludes that school-based literacy movement programs can strengthen students' reading literacy when implemented as a whole-school, structured, reflective, and resource-supported literacy culture. Future research should examine long-term program sustainability, parental involvement, digital reading resources, and literacy movement implementation across different school contexts.

Declaration of AI-Assisted Technologies

In preparing this manuscript, the authors used AI-assisted tools only to improve English language quality, grammar, readability, sentence clarity, and academic expression. The AI tools were not used to generate research data, conduct data analysis, produce findings, or

draw conclusions. All conceptual arguments, data interpretation, methodological decisions, and scholarly conclusions remain the full responsibility of the authors. The authors carefully reviewed, edited, and verified all AI-assisted outputs to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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