

Research Article

# The Importance of Literacy in the World of Education: "How Important is Literacy Really"

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**Abstract:** Literacy is a fundamental skill that is very important in the field of education, especially for students in Indonesia. This study aims to explore the understanding of 7th and 8th-grade students regarding the importance of literacy, the challenges they face in improving their literacy skills, and to provide recommendations for enhancing literacy programs in schools. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with semi-structured interviews conducted at SMP N 15 Medan. The results of the study indicate that although students are aware of the importance of literacy, they face various challenges, including low reading interest, lack of access to quality reading materials, and minimal environmental support. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective literacy strategies in schools through the suggestions and implications provided in this study.

**Keywords:** education; literacy; literacy challenges; middle school students.

## 1. Introduction

Literacy is the ability to read, write, and understand information that is very important in education. In Indonesia, educational literacy faces serious challenges, especially among students. Based on the results of international assessments such as PISA and PIRLS, Indonesia is often ranked low in literacy skills. This research aims to identify the understanding of 7-8 grade students about the importance of literacy, the challenges they face, and provide recommendations to improve literacy programs in schools.

Literacy in the world of education is a very important skill for students, including not only reading and writing skills, but also critical and creative thinking skills. Literacy serves as the main foundation for students to understand the subject matter and actively participate in the learning process. Without good literacy skills, students will have difficulty learning and face academic challenges. In addition, literacy helps students develop analytical and creative thinking skills, which are indispensable in today's information age.

Literacy is not just the ability to read and write, but also includes the ability to think critically, analyze information, and use knowledge in the context of daily life. In today's digital era, digital literacy is also an important aspect that must be mastered by students. However, data shows that the reading interest of the Indonesian people is still relatively low, and this has an impact on students' literacy skills. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that affect literacy among students and look for solutions to improve their literacy abilities.

This study aims to explore the understanding of students in grades 7-8 about the importance of literacy, the challenges they face in improving literacy skills, as well as providing recommendations to improve literacy programs in schools. By understanding the understanding and challenges faced by students, it is hoped that this research can provide deeper insight into the condition of literacy among junior high school students.

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The benefit of this research is to provide useful information for educators, schools, and policymakers in designing more effective literacy programs. This research is expected to contribute to the development of better literacy strategies in schools through the suggestions and implications given. Thus, it is expected that increased literacy among students will not only have an impact on their academic achievement, but also on the development of better character and life skills in the future.

## 2. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. This method was chosen to explore students' understanding of the importance of literacy, the challenges they face, as well as to gain deeper insights into their experiences and views on literacy in education. The technique used in data collection in this study is semi-structured interviews. This interview aims to find out students' views on literacy, the challenges they face in improving literacy skills, and the importance of literacy in their learning process. The questions asked are open-ended to give the respondents the freedom to express their opinions.

The interview was carried out by conducting a direct trial using the interview guidelines that had been prepared. Questions are asked in a semi-structured manner to test readability and relevance of the questions to the research objectives. Observations of respondents were also carried out to record verbal and non-verbal responses. Then, followed by the alidity of the instrument was tested by analyzing the correlation between the questions asked and the educational literacy indicators. Questions that do not provide data according to the indicator will be revised or removed to improve measurement accuracy. The reliability of the instrument is also tested to ensure the consistency of measurement results if repeated under the same conditions.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 20 7th and 8th grade students at SMP N 15 Medan. The data collected included students' understanding of literacy, its impact on the learning process, as well as the activities they carried out to improve literacy skills. The majority of students show a high awareness of the importance of literacy. As many as 80% of students stated that literacy is very important in education, while 15% consider it quite important, and only 5% do not consider literacy to be important. This shows that students have a good understanding of the role of literacy in supporting their learning process.

The results of the interviews also showed that 60% of students actively read books, 30% wrote stories or diaries, and 10% participated in reading clubs or other literacy activities. In addition, about 70% of students feel that schools have supported literacy activities through programs such as libraries and reading competitions, while 30% feel that such support is still lacking.

However, even though students are aware of the importance of literacy, they still face various challenges. Some of the key challenges identified in the study include low interest in reading, where many students have no motivation to read outside of schoolwork and tend to only read when instructed by teachers. In addition, the lack of access to quality reading materials is a problem, with many students complaining about the lack of variety and quality of reading materials in school libraries. The lack of environmental support is also a significant factor, where students feel less encouraged to read from parents and teachers. Many parents do not accompany their children in learning, so children are not used to reading and writing activities. Less engaging teaching methods also contribute to this challenge, where many teachers still use conventional methods that do not actively engage students, making the learning atmosphere unattractive and reducing students' interest in participating.

The discussion of this research relates the findings to literacy and education theories to provide a more in-depth analysis of the importance of literacy in the world of education. Literacy, as explained by various experts, is a fundamental skill that includes not only reading and writing, but also critical understanding of the information received. In the context of education, literacy is the foundation for students to understand the subject matter, complete assignments, and communicate effectively.

Although the majority of students have a high awareness of the importance of literacy, the challenges faced show the need for a more holistic approach in improving educational literacy in Indonesia. Schools need to provide a supportive environment, including better access to quality reading materials and more engaging teaching methods. The School Literacy

Movement (GLS) has made a positive contribution to the development of students' literacy skills through the integration of literacy programs into the school curriculum. However, its implementation still faces challenges such as lack of supporting resources and lack of training for teachers to manage literacy programs effectively.

## 6. Conclusions

This research shows that literacy is a fundamental component in education that not only serves as a tool for reading and writing, but also as a basis for the development of critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills. The results showed that students in grades 7-8 of junior high school who had good literacy skills tended to be better able to understand the subject matter, actively participate in class discussions, and apply their knowledge in the context of daily life.

However, the study also identified various challenges that students face in improving their literacy skills. Some of these challenges include lack of access to quality reading materials, lack of support from family and school environments, and teaching methods that are less interesting and interactive.

In the context of this study, the findings on school support that are perceived by some students to be lacking show the need to increase teacher capacity and provide supporting facilities such as attractive reading books or access to digital-based learning technology.

This research provides important insights into how literacy affects students' learning processes and the challenges that need to be overcome to increase the effectiveness of literacy programs in schools. Literacy is not only an academic tool but also a life skill that supports the intellectual and social development of students.

Thus, through this study, it emphasizes the importance of literacy, especially in the educational environment which still faces common challenges that must be immediately overcome and followed up from the school to the government and channeled to the community.

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