



## Development of Reading Literacy Culture in Elementary School Age Children in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang During the New Normal Period

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
<p>The low level of literacy that occurs among elementary school age children, especially in Indonesia, means that they still lack knowledge of the importance of literacy culture itself. Children from as early as possible should be given knowledge about the importance of literacy. This research discusses the understanding and development of reading literacy culture among elementary school age children in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang during the period of new normal. This research used a qualitative method and with a case study approach. The method for taking informants uses the method purposive sampling, while the data collection technique uses interview, observation, and document techniques. The outcomes of the research show that elementary school age children in Pekunden Flats have increased their interest in reading during the new normal compared to before during the pandemic era, there was a very significant decline in interest in reading. This is caused by several factors, including changes in the system of teaching and learning activities, government policies, and understanding of the culture of reading literacy in children which is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include awareness of oneself, parents and family. External factors include the social environment, globalization, community and school environment.</p>	<p><b>Article History:</b> <i>Submitted/Received 07 Feb 2024</i> <i>First Revised 02 Mar 2024</i> <i>Accepted 11 May 2024</i> <i>First Available online 18 May 2024</i> <i>Publication Date 31 May 2024</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Keyword:</b> <i>Literacy Culture,</i> <i>Pandemic,</i> <i>New Normal,</i> <i>Development,</i> <i>Children.</i></p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between literacy and the new normal is very complex and varied. The new normal, which is marked by changes in behavior and social norms due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has a significant impact on reading and writing education. First, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital literacy, as people increasingly rely on technology for communication, education and work. This has led to a greater emphasis on digital literacy skills in education and training, as well as increased access to digital resources and technology for learning. Second, the pandemic also underscores the importance of health literacy, as people must navigate complex health information and make decisions about their own health and the health of others. This emphasizes the need for clear and accurate health communication, as well as the importance of critical thinking skills and information literacy in evaluating health information. Third, the pandemic also had a significant impact on literacy practices and reading habits. With schools and libraries closed, people have had to rely on alternative sources of reading material, such as e-books and online articles. This raises questions about access to reading materials and the digital divide, as well as the impact of digital reading on reading comprehension and engagement. Overall, the new normal has highlighted the importance of literacy skills and the need for literacy education to adapt to changing circumstances and new technologies. It also underscores the importance of critical thinking and information literacy skills in navigating complex information environments and making informed decisions (Safitri & Muryanti, 2021; Mustadi et al., 2022; Ulfadhilah & Na'imah, 2021).

The meaning of culture in society involves the inheritance of values, norms, beliefs, practices, and creative expressions that are passed from one generation to the next. Culture shapes the way individuals view the world, interact with other people, and respond to their surrounding environment. As with literacy, literacy is closely related to culture and influences each other. Literacy includes the ability to read, write, and understand information, while culture includes the values, norms, language, and practices passed from one generation to the next (Putri, 2017; Hermawan & Susilo, 2018). According to the Center for Educational Assessment, Ministry of Education and Culture (2017), literacy has 6 basic components consisting of literacy, numeracy, science, digital, financial, and culture and citizenship. Literacy itself is defined as the ability to read and write. This process starts from childhood in the family environment and is then supported or developed in schools, social circles and the community (Damaianti et al., 2017; Karpava, 2021). In reality, children still consider reading to be just a formality and not a habit. In terms of reading alone, Indonesia is indeed very far behind when based on several recent research results. In fact, reading activities should be used as a hobby that will be useful in getting information and learning tools for them.

The development of a country can be seen from its social life, how a society behaves and thinks so it can be used as a guide in determining the level of education that has been obtained and implemented in its daily life. The higher the level of education of the people of a country, the better quality of life will be. A person's ability to learn and manage information is an important asset for a person to improve their knowledge, mentality, way of thinking and character (Padmadewi, 2018). Literacy culture has a very important role for human survival because literacy culture, consciously or unintentionally, can form people who have better qualities, such as going from not having any knowledge to being able to know many things (Arby et al., 2019; Sa'diyah & Arbarini, 2021; Bhola, 1990). Literacy is the process of presenting and conveying information in text or audio-visual form that is easy to understand and

understand. Reading is a very important skill to improve literacy, especially for children who are still in the learning process (Nielsen & Molson, 1996).

Elementary school age children should be given knowledge of the importance of literacy culture, especially reading. Literacy in elementary school age children mainly involves learning to read and write. Children learn to identify letters, form words, and understand the meaning of text (Basyiroh, 2017; Bujuri, 2018). These abilities become the basis for further learning at higher levels of education. Usually there are two factors that influence the development of literacy culture in children, namely internal and external factors. According to internal factors, including awareness of oneself, parents and family. External factors include the social environment, globalization, community and school environment (Padmadewi, 2018). At the Pekunden Semarang flats, the supporting facilities are the reading hut. The reading lodge itself is a step to help children with reading. Likewise in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang, the children there still have difficulty reading and do not understand the importance of literacy. Children are more interested in playing with gadgets than reading books. Their parents tend to give them gadgets and let their children play with them during the pandemic rather than getting used to reading books.

According to Deborah (in Padmadewi, 2018), researching the role of parents in the literacy development of elementary school-aged children also explains that children's interest in reading has a strong relationship with the method used by parents in reading books. This research shows that elementary school age children in the Pekunden Semarang flats have an urgency or interest in maintaining their literacy culture during the pandemic period to the new normal so that their interest in reading or writing literacy does not disappear after the pandemic ends. This research was carried out because it had found several facts in the field as well as several journal sources where the writer had compared the problems that occurred in the field with the journals that had been researched, which had almost all similarities and differences. Based on observations made by researchers, children in Pekunden Flats in Semarang lack insight into how important literacy is and there is a fairly significant decline in literacy culture itself. Facts in the field show that there is an urgency, namely a decline in reading literacy. This is the basis for carrying out this research.

## **2. METHODS**

This research uses case study research with a qualitative approach as a guide for conducting and determining the research flow. Qualitative research is research that solves problems using empirical data. Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from the participant's perspective. A case study is part of a qualitative method that aims to explore a particular case in more depth by involving the collection of various sources of information (De Casterlé et al., 2012; Sugiyono, 2014; Pandey & Patnaik, 2014).

Sample determination was carried out using purposive sampling technique. According to (Triono, 2019; Rawung, 2020), purposive sampling itself is a sampling technique that selects respondents with the required criteria or characteristics, where these criteria have been determined by researchers who have objectives in line with this research. Character determination was taken because not all people in the Pekunden Semarang flats had the opportunity to be used as research samples, and researchers were limited in reaching all of them. (i) Community figures in the Pekunden Semarang flats. (ii) Elementary school age children in the Pekunden Semarang flats. (iii) Parents of children in the Pekunden Semarang flats. Based on predetermined sample criteria, 11 informants were selected to obtain research data (Heryana, 2018).

Data collection is carried out through various processes as follows.

- (i) Indrawan & Suharso, Development of Reading Literacy Culture in Elementary School Age ... Interview, in which asking several questions related to research to informants to obtain primary data.
- (ii) Field observations, which visit the Pekunden Semarang flats and the Pekunden Semarang reading hut to find out the conditions occurring in the field.
- (iii) Data collection is carried out from various sources to complete and confirm the results of data findings between one source and another. The data that has been obtained is then analyzed using the model from (Miles and Huberman, 1994), in which data analysis activities take place continuously and are carried out interactively until the data experiences saturation. This model has three stages, namely:
  - a. Data reduction: refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data that appears in written transcripts or field notes.
  - b. Data presentation: this stage is to present an organized and compressed collection of information that allows it to be used as a reference for drawing conclusions and taking action.
  - c. Inference drawing: deciding, noting patterns, clarity, regularity, casual flow, and prepositions.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding of Community Figures and Parents of Children in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang regarding the Culture of Reading Literacy before the Covid-19 pandemic in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang, there are many supporting facilities for the needs of the community there, such as reading huts. There is a main function of the reading cottage, as a place to read, the reading cottage has the main function as a means of developing knowledge and improving the quality of human resources in the Pekunden flats themselves. There is only one reading hut located on the 1st floor which is looked after by a husband and wife who live on the 4th floor of the Pekunden Flats, namely Mr Sudiono and Mrs Sri Rahayu. They have formed a reading cottage since 2006 until now, this was conveyed directly by Mr. Sudiono as follows,

*"There's very little reading here, actually, that's one of the biggest problems why the children of the Pekunden Flats in Semarang read so little from the past until now because there are no human resources to look after the reading hut itself. Nowadays, we are old, we can't do these things forever, we need regeneration for that. Because I'm sorry, the average resident in the Pekunden flats in Semarang is a middle to lower economic group, so the average teenager in the Pekunden flats goes straight to work or migrates out of town. I have managed a reading corner for almost 17 years, starting from 2006 until now, with my mother too. From those whose floors were still plaster, they have now become ceramics, from those with a small collection, they have now become quite large, sir."* (Sudiono, July 8 2023)

The above statement is in line with the opinion of Saadati & Sadli (2019), the low interest in reading among the community, especially among parents and children, has a big impact on low reading literacy skills. The reading cottage, which has been running for 17 years, has only

been managed by Mr. Sudiono and Mrs. Sri Rahayu themselves without anyone helping. The factor of inadequate human resources is also an obstacle for them because the residents in the flats would also prefer to continue working immediately after graduating from school. This is also because the average population in Pekunden Flats is low income which is the basic requirement for occupying these flats. Apart from that, the collection of books in the reading hut is also quite small, in terms of quantity it is already quite large, but what they have are old books which are no longer interesting enough for the children in the Pekunden Flats to read. The benefits of reading huts for the community, especially for elementary school age children, are various, including reading facilities, access to information, as well as other collective activities such as teaching, training, and so on.

The activities at the reading cottage at the Pekunden Semarang Flats are an innovation from Mr. Sudiono and Mrs. Sri Rahayu since 2006 and have provided many benefits for the children at the Pekunden Semarang Flats. These activities usually include reading books together, then studying lessons at school according to class, and doing storytelling. The reading cottage is open twice every week, on Wednesdays guided by Mrs. Sri Rahayu and Sundays guided by Mr. Sudiono. However, as it progressed, only a few children came to the reading hut. It's not often that the two of them have to go around the flat to look for children to invite them to read in the reading hut. The lack of personal awareness for children in reading means that sometimes the reading huts are also empty of visitors. This has become evidence that the level of understanding of the reading literacy culture in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang is quite alarming and worrying.

In its application, the understanding of community leaders and also parents of children in the Pekunden Semarang flats has been good by providing some understanding about the importance of reading as explained. This condition was later confirmed as true by one of the sources as the head of neighborhood of the Pekunden Semarang flats, which was explained as follows.

*"Yes, it's clear, because if children are not guided by their parents, who else? The first education that small children get is from their parents, even though they can't read, at least they can hear from people they trust, like their parents and also, for example, children use gadgets that lead to negative things. Parents must always be alert and always be able to find out if there is anything strange about the child's behavior, especially if they are under 10 years old. All parents want their children to be more helpful to society. It doesn't have to be about material, the important thing is that our children can do useful things in society by reading."* (Adi Wardono, July 1 2023)

Based on answers from Adi Wardono and Mahfud, it was confirmed that the role of parents is very important in forming a reading literacy culture in their children today. Without a supervisory role from parents, children can fall into negative things that can affect the child's behavior. In the Pekunden Semarang flats, there are still parents of children who are less alert and understand how important it is to understand literacy culture itself. As explained by one of the informants, namely the reading boarding house officer at the Pekunden Flats in Semarang, as follows.

*"Yes, because usually I also give parents knowledge about the importance of reading to their children, but the parents in the Pekunden flats are still not enthusiastic about imparting knowledge to their children, so they think this knowledge is very trivial, even though it shouldn't be. There are too many reasons."* (Sri Rahayu, July 8 2023)

Based on Mrs. Sri Rahayu's statement, she confirmed that some of the children's parents in the Pekunden Semarang flats were still lacking in understanding regarding literacy culture, which led to a decline in reading literacy culture during the pandemic. This condition is in line with the opinion of [Mulasih & Hudhana \(2020\)](#) that fun home activities including reading created by parents are one of the positive effects in developing children's own literacy. Therefore, children who were originally very active in reading before the pandemic, during the pandemic they preferred to play with gadgets rather than read because there was no support from parents in providing an understanding of the culture of reading literacy itself. This condition was confirmed by one of the elementary school age children in the Pekunden Semarang flats as follows.

*"Before the pandemic, I always went to the reading cabin, Sis, because it was fun. However, after the pandemic, reading cottage activities were stopped, so I switched to playing on my gadget because it was better and more exciting than reading."* (Tiara, July 1 2023)

The conditions described by the informant above state that the pandemic has caused everything in the Pekunden Semarang flats to decline, including the activities of the reading cottage itself. In the past, children who often read in reading huts because of the pandemic seemed to have lost their identity in reading and turned to playing with gadgets. The reading boarding house as a facility to support a culture of reading literacy is not working well enough due to a lack of understanding from parents which causes them to lose urgency in reading itself. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the culture of reading literacy became increasingly worrying because of various government policies that limited community activities, one of which was regarding school policies and public services.

Elementary school aged children in the Pekunden Semarang flats understand the culture of reading literacy. Indonesia, as the country with the fourth largest population in the world, has a big responsibility to be able to form an advanced society, one of which is through education. Educational facilities are an important assessment in a country so that it can be called a good country. Education is the first step for the government in its efforts to form a quality society, one of which is through a literacy culture. Literacy culture, especially reading, has a very important role in forming a quality and dignified societal entity. Reading is an activity that can never be separated from the daily survival of humans from various sectors. The ability to read is also a fundamental basis for humans in social life so that through education a culture of reading literacy can be developed from an early age ([Rachman & Cahyani, 2019](#)). Several studies and data have proven that Indonesia has a very low literacy culture. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Indonesian people's interest in reading is 0.001%, which means that out of a thousand people, only one person has a high interest in reading. Furthermore, according to research entitled *World's Most Literate Nations Ranked* conducted by Central Connecticut State University in March 2016, Indonesia was ranked 60th out of 61 countries with low literacy levels. This is quite worrying for Indonesia because it can be evidence that society does not yet have a good mindset regarding the urgency of the importance of a reading literacy culture ([Mulasih & Hudhana, 2020](#)).

The culture of reading literacy should be familiarized from an early age so that it becomes a good habit for children, especially elementary school children. At elementary school level,

children usually start learning and being able to read because of a requirement at school, reading seems to be an obligation for students because all activities at school involve reading (Tantri & Dewantara, 2017). Childhood is a golden age for humans because it can form habits for children and they have long memories during that phase (Rachman & Cahyani, 2019). There are quite a lot of factors that influence the low literacy culture among Indonesian society, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors include not having a good enough understanding of the importance of the literacy culture of reading and preferring to spend free time doing more enjoyable activities such as playing games so that interest in books becomes low. One of the children of Pekunden Flats gave a statement related to this matter as follows,

*"I don't like reading, sir. Because I'm lazy. I also don't know the importance of reading, although reading can increase our knowledge. But I feel I know more from gadgets than from books, sir. Maybe I'm just the lazy one."* (Haifz, June 1 2023)

Based on the statement from Hafiz, as a child in the Pekunden Flats, this is evidence that the factors causing the low reading literacy culture are one of the reasons why children cannot understand the benefits and urgency of reading. Apart from that, Hafiz spends more time playing with gadgets and thinks he can also get more information through electronic media. In the current era of digitalization, all information and knowledge can be obtained through electronic media (Aprinta, 2013). But for a child who still needs comprehensive guidance, the function of gadgets can have a negative impact because the child's curiosity is still quite high. Therefore, the role of parents is very important in supervising children's actions in using gadgets. The role of parents is one of the external factors in the low reading literacy culture. This condition was later confirmed as true by one of the sources as the head of RT 4 of the Pekunden Semarang flats, which was explained as follows.

*"If I look at it lately, since the pandemic until now, I think it's reduced. Because they are now playing more with gadgets. In fact, before the pandemic, elementary school age children here really liked to read in the Pekunden Semarang flat reading hut. But behind them playing with gadgets, I think they are still using gadgets to get the information they need."* (Mahfud, July 1 2023)

Based on the answers from informants, Mahfud confirmed that the role of parents is very important in forming a reading literacy culture in their children today. Without a supervisory role from parents, children can fall into negative things that can affect the child's behavior. When children engage in negative activities, at that time parents play a role in supervising and limiting their children's behavior in using gadgets. Apart from that, parents also act as good examples because the family is the first education for every child so whatever parents do will be a reflection of the child's own behavior. This supervision is carried out in the interests of the child's future which is expected to be beneficial and useful to other people. This condition is in line with Park's opinion (in Padmadewi, 2018) that the form of parental involvement/role is one of three positive components in increasing the basic literacy of elementary school age children in almost all countries. He also added that this involvement/role had a positive influence on developing literacy skills.

The decrease in the culture of reading literacy in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang occurred not only due to the increasing shift in gadget use, there were several other factors, such as the lack of facilities and the lack of book collections in every facility available in the Pekunden Flats. However, shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic ended and transitioned to a new normal

period, Mr. Sudiono and Mrs. Sri Rahayu took the initiative to restart the reading cottage activities again in collaboration with the Indonesian Prosperous Learning Community (KBSI) right when the pandemic ended. This condition was confirmed by one of the founders of KBSI, namely Ms. Novita, as follows.

*"Yes, we are working with Mr Sudiono and Mrs Sri Rahayu to reopen the reading cottage which has been abandoned by the Covid-19 pandemic. Because conditions are very worrying in terms of interest in reading among elementary school age children in the Pekunden Semarang flats. Therefore, I and my friends took the initiative to reopen it in order to increase the culture of reading literacy in the Pekunden Semarang flats, especially among elementary school age children themselves"* (Novita, 12 August 2023)

Based on statements from Novita, it can be said that the Indonesian Prosperous Learning Community is an initiative that connects volunteers from all over Indonesia who have the same desire, such as teaching children not just to learn to read but also by learning how to read. Which is exciting and fun. In the context of a reading learning community, members engage in activities to share information, ideas, and strategies that encourage individual and collective development. The main goal of the reading learning community is to actualize the role of each member in improving the quality of reading for children, as well as creating a safe and stimulating space for learning together with children. Reading learning communities can be implemented through various methods, such as online discussions, forums, or even offline training. The success of a reading learning community depends on the sincerity, involvement and dedication of its members to improve the quality of children's reading themselves. The reading learning community is a creative effort to increase interest and reading skills in the children who are members of it but also in the volunteers. Through this, individuals can learn from other readers who have different experiences and abilities, thereby improving their overall reading quality.

Reading huts as a facility to support a culture of reading literacy are not working well enough because of the personal awareness of children who still do not understand the urgency of reading itself. Therefore, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the culture of reading literacy became increasingly worrying because of various government policies that limited community activities, one of which was regarding school policies and public services. However, with the end of the pandemic and the transition to the new normal period, with the addition of reading cottage service officers collaborating with the Indonesian Prosperous Learning Community (KBSI), the reading literacy culture that was left behind is slowly starting to recover as before. Development of reading literacy culture in elementary school age children during the new normal era. The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on various sectors. The policies set by the government have brought many changes to society in carrying out normal activities. This phase is usually called the new normal, which is a policy of reopening various public activities and activities normally on a limited basis and using standards set by the government. This restriction was carried out in order to adapt and adjust to the conditions that occurred during the pandemic, namely by using health standards and social distancing.

The sector that has a big influence on the policies set by the government is the education sector. One of the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture is the Distance Learning (*Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh*) system which is carried out online. In the end,



this policy encourages parents to carry out teaching and learning activities through electronic media such as laptops and gadgets. These sudden changes often make parents feel high anxiety for their children. The absence of thorough preparation means that parents do not provide good limits and limitations to their children in using electronic media, especially gadgets. Elementary school children usually spend more time reading at school because of policies in each school in an effort to increase children's interest in reading. However, since the pandemic occurred, this habit has been eliminated so that in the end there is a significant difference in the process of developing literacy culture in schools before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, as stated by one of the following informant,

*"Yes, since the pandemic I think it has really influenced the decrease in literacy culture itself, because they now play more with gadgets. In fact, before the pandemic, elementary school age children usually read more books at school than at home. I see children playing with their gadgets more often, maybe because schools have to use cellphones during the pandemic, that's why children have gotten into the habit of playing with their gadgets."* (Mahfud, 1 July 2023)

Based on the answers from Mahfud, it can be seen that during the pandemic, interest in reading among children in the Pekunden Semarang flats has decreased due to the policy implemented to carry out teaching and learning activities at home online. Children play with gadgets more often to spend their daily time. One of the factors underlying this transition is teaching and learning activities carried out offline via gadgets. This is in line with the opinion of [Safitri & Muryati \(2021\)](#), in the end parents also give children the freedom to use gadgets both in teaching and learning activities and in doing school assignments. Increasingly, children can explore gadgets more freely, thereby giving them the opportunity to carry out activities outside of school. This factor creates new habits for children and increasingly abandons conventional activities, namely the reading culture that they were previously accustomed to, and this culture has even shifted to using gadgets.

Teaching activities began to be carried out when the new normal era was implemented. Collaboration between the Pekunden Semarang flat reading cottage service staff and the Indonesian Prosperous Learning Community (*Kelompok Belajar Sejahteraan Indonesia*) has produced good results in the development of reading literacy culture. In the new normal era, teaching and learning activities have slowly shifted since 2021 to a hybrid system. A hybrid learning system is a learning method that combines or combines online learning with face-to-face learning. Through this system, elementary school children are slowly returning to conventional reading activities and gradually starting to abandon the new habit that was created during the pandemic, namely playing with gadgets. This was also admitted by one of the following informants,

*"I like reading now, because there's no pandemic anymore and I can go to school everyday and I'm not allowed to bring my cell phone, so I rarely open my cell phone. Even at school, the teachers also give instructions to always read books."* (Fia, May 1, 2023)

*"During the Covid-19, because the children are often at home, I usually give them activities to read books. After that, the children usually go out with friends to do the assignments given online and use gadgets. Now, during the new normal period, children tend to like reading books at school and at home because the assignments*

*given by teachers are in books lent by the school, so children like to read books given by the school.*" (Umi Mardiyah, May 1 2023)

Based on the explanations from the two informants above, teaching and learning activities in schools provide significant development of literacy culture because children are encouraged to abandon the habit of playing with gadgets because the school policy does not give permission to use gadgets during school. Likewise, school facilities provide book loans to children to support teaching and learning activities so that at home children are also encouraged to carry out reading activities through assignments given by the teacher. Apart from that, this causes the children in the flats to slowly return to reading activities in the reading huts. This condition was later confirmed as true by Mr. Sudiono and Mrs. Sri Rahayu as service officers at the Pekunden Semarang flats reading cottage, which was explained as follows:

*"Since going back to school, the reading cottage has reopened. The children sometimes work in groups and do assignments in the reading cottage, so sometimes the children also read books there. But it's not as frequent as before, in the past it could be twice a week, now it's once a week at most."* (Sudiono, July 8 2023)

*"Yes, it has been reopened since the children started going to school, but not as often as before."* (Sri Rahayu, July 8 2023)

During the pandemic, the reading hut almost never had visitors because of government policy which required social distancing for community activities. This is because during the pandemic the reading cottage could not be opened as usual due to the policy of closing public services. As a result, the reading cottage became neglected and the books owned by the reading cottage were also left untouched. Children's habit of reading twice a week at the reading cottage has also finally been abandoned since the pandemic.

In the new normal conditions, government policies are increasingly relaxed so that reading huts can be reopened, but not as regularly as before the pandemic. The children have returned to their activities in the reading hut to do group work and do assignments, thereby encouraging them to carry out reading activities in the reading hut. Based on this, slowly the habit of playing with gadgets is changing to reading activities due to the hybrid system policy which supports them in leaving gadgets behind. The government's policy in establishing provisions regarding the learning system is a good basis for improving literacy culture after the pandemic.

Apart from these factors, in fact, if the children in the Pekunden Flats in Semarang have a good understanding of the reading literacy culture, then the reading literacy culture during the pandemic will not be abandoned and will remain consistent until the new normal period. So internal factors such as understanding the culture of reading literacy should also play an important and crucial role in encouraging every elementary school child to be able to carry out reading activities, especially by parents. Parents' approach to children has an important role in providing children with an understanding of the culture of reading literacy, this was explained by one of the informants as follows;

*"I usually say it slowly, it gives me a good understanding of what literacy is like. If a child is forced, they tend not to want to and even fight, it's better, sometimes you talk about it slowly. And later they will carry this understanding into adulthood."* (Sutina, June 1 2023)

Based on Sutina's answer, it can be seen that if children are given a good understanding of what a reading literacy culture is, this culture will persist even in certain conditions. The pandemic has definitely had an impact on decreasing interest in reading, but because it is supported by a poor level of understanding, interest in reading has decreased very significantly during the pandemic. This is also in line with the opinion of [Mulasih & Hudhana \(2020\)](#) that there is a new habit carried out by children during the pandemic, namely playing with gadgets, children prefer to do this activity because they think it is more fun. With this good understanding, children should be able to better understand the benefits and urgency of the literacy culture of reading and will still be able to continue this culture even though they have left it a long time ago during the new normal without having to wait for the school's learning system policy.

The results of the analysis of research data that have been described by researchers are that as part of literacy, the culture of reading has developed significantly in the generation of children growing up in the new normal environment. One example of this change is the change in learning strategies to accommodate children's desires to learn from home. My research reveals that there are several factors driving changes in the culture of reading literacy in the current generation of children. One important factor in improving the quality of education through the use of sophisticated technology. For example, children growing up in a new normal environment often access learning resources via the internet, such as video-on-demand (VOD) or learning platforms such as YouTube and Google Classroom. In this case, it is important to understand that children who grow up in a new normal environment also have the right to learn creatively and develop in their literacy field. Another important issue is the acceleration in the availability of information. In these conditions, it is important for educators to teach useful information literacy skills to children.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of research analysis regarding the development of reading literacy culture in elementary school aged children in the Pekunden Semarang flats during the new normal period, it was concluded that during the pre-pandemic period elementary school aged children in the Pekunden Semarang flats did more reading activities at school because demands for teaching and learning activities, but since the pandemic hit there has been a very significant decline because the teaching and learning activity system is carried out online and parents' understanding of their children is still lacking. The impact of decreasing interest in reading is caused by three factors, namely changes in the learning system, government policies, and low understanding of literacy culture due to internal and external factors. However, in the end, during the new normal, reading literacy habits slowly increased due to the learning system returning to normal, and there was a collaboration between the reading boarding school and the Indonesian Sejaterahan Learning Community (KBSI) in the hope of returning interest in reading to elementary school age children in the Pekunden Semarang flats. Children are starting to get used to reading books again without having to use their gadgets and teachers at school can make good observations and supervision of the development of children's reading literacy culture.

## 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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