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Literacy Habituation Program in Developing Reading Skills for Students with Intellectual Barriers at SMPKh Level

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ABSTRACT

The literacy habituation program aims to develop the reading skills of students with intellectual disabilities at the SMPKh level. This research focuses on the implementation of a literacy program specifically designed to meet the needs of students who experience difficulties in reading. Through an inclusive approach, this program not only improves reading skills, but also builds students' self-confidence and motivation. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data was collected through observation, interviews with teachers and students, as well as analysis of documents related to literacy programs. The research results show that structured reading activities, such as reading together and using reading materials appropriate to students' level of understanding, are very effective in improving reading skills. Students show significant improvements in reading skills after participating in the program for one semester. The literacy habituation program has proven to be effective in improving reading skills for students with intellectual disabilities. It is hoped that this program can become a model for other schools in efforts to improve literacy skills among students with special needs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious effort to transfer culture from one generation to the next. This process is realized through a learning atmosphere and learning activities that encourage students to actively develop their potential. The aim is for students to have religious spiritual strength, self-control abilities, good personality, intelligence, noble morals, and skills that are beneficial for themselves and society (Rahman et al., 2022).

With the rapid development of science, all students must improve their reading and writing skills to gain sufficient knowledge and understanding to compete and keep up with the times. Reading is a process of receiving language that involves introducing, interpreting and understanding the content of a reading. The purpose of reading is to obtain information from the text read. The development of students' understanding is influenced by various factors, one of which is teaching strategies. If teachers use appropriate reading strategies, students will more easily understand the lesson material. Apart from that, internal factors within students, such as low motivation, can also be an obstacle in improving reading comprehension (Nadia Gustiani et al., 2022).

One group that requires special attention in education is children with intellectual disabilities. Mental retardation is a condition where a person has below average intelligence, which causes limitations in intellectual function and difficulty in caring for and taking care of oneself (Anan & Budi, 2023). Mental retardation is a form of mental retardation, where children experience limitations in intellectual, physical, emotional, and social aspects. This condition requires special treatment so that children can develop optimally according to their abilities (Putri Ambarwati & Darmawati, 2020).

Classification of intellectual disability is important for determining appropriate educational services. Classification of mentally retarded children is very important because every mentally retarded child has various individual differences (Graces Maranata et al., 2023). Classifications for mentally retarded children vary greatly, depending on the skills or perspective of mentally retarded children. Classification is very necessary to make it easier to provide educational services for mentally retarded children. Classification of mental retardation, including:

- 1.1 Mild mentally retarded, generally mildly mentally retarded children do not experience physical disorders, it is said that because physically they look like normal children in general, therefore it is quite difficult to differentiate between mildly mentally retarded children and children in general physically. According to the Weschler Scale, mildly mentally retarded children are one of the classifications of mentally retarded children who have an intellectual intelligence of 69-55 so that they can be taught to take care of themselves (Self Development), learn to read, write and do simple arithmetic to a certain level.
- 1.2 Moderately mentally retarded, according to the Weschler Scale, moderately mentally retarded is a child who has an IQ of 54-40, with the IQ they have, they can be educated to take care of themselves (Self Development), but they find it difficult to learn academically, for example learning to count, write and read. And in their daily lives, mentally retarded children need continuous (intense) supervision.
- 1.3 Severe Mental Impairment, according to the Weschler Scale, a severe intellectual disability is those who have an IQ starting from 39-25, so they are unable to take care of themselves.

The classification of intellectual disabilities seen from learning needs is as follows:

- 1.1 Educable, namely children who have intellectual abilities equivalent to fifth grade elementary school.
- 1.2 Trainable, namely a child who has the ability to take care of himself, self-defense, and social adjustment is very limited in his ability to receive academic education
- 1.3 Custodia, which can train children on how to help themselves and others.

However, the education system in Indonesia faces various obstacles in providing education for students with special needs. Limited access to high-quality education is one of the biggest problems, especially in rural areas where resources and facilities are sometimes inadequate. Apart from that, the low quality of teaching received by students with special needs is also caused by a lack of teacher preparation. Students with special needs also have difficulty following what is taught in class because the existing curriculum is often not modified to meet their needs. Students with special needs continue to face significant social stigma, leading to marginalization and discrimination in the classroom. As a result, the academic achievement gap between students with special needs and their peers is widening.

To overcome these challenges, literacy is essential as it provides the foundation for overall student growth. Reading and writing skills are necessary not only for academic success but also for the development of critical and analytical thinking skills that are important in everyday life. Literacy is an ability related to activities of accessing information through reading, writing, analyzing, observing, and understanding information critically, idealistically, dialectically, and autocratically. In this case, technology can be used to increase the effectiveness of literacy activities (Sari Harahap et al., 2022). This skill is considered the best skill in honing language skills. Because it can improve writing skills which is the last language skill a person learns depending on a person's listening, speaking and reading skills. The School Literacy Movement (GLS) is here as a solution that aims to help children become more proficient in reading. According to Septiary and Sidabutar (2020), there are several factors that support the School Literacy Movement program, namely:

- 1.1 Availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, such as a library, reading corner, computer laboratory, projector in each class, as well as a literacy environment that includes a work wall, achievement boards, posters, positive sentences, and awards won by students.
- 1.2 Allocation of sufficient funds during the implementation of GLS.
- 1.3 Good collaboration is established with various organizations, including the Education Department and school committees.
- 1.4 Donations of reading books from the school committee and students' parents.
- 1.5 Development of media used in implementing GLS.
- 1.6 There is a communication group between the school and parents to strengthen relationships.

Efforts to improve children's literacy skills are activities that must be implemented (Kharizmi 2021). One of the strategies implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture is to launch the School Literacy Movement (GLS) program. The Ministry of Education and Culture defines GLS as a participatory movement involving all members of schools, academics, publishers, media, community figures who can provide role models, the business world, and other stakeholders, coordinated by the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education (Sapri et al., 2022). This program is designed in three main phases: learning, development, and habituation.

Thus, GLS not only contributes to improving students' overall reading skills, but also plays an important role in creating an inclusive learning environment for all students, including those with special needs.

To foster a positive environment and arouse students' interest in literacy activities, the process of adapting to literacy activities begins with habituation steps. Starting with welcoming students at the school gate until the entrance bell, the aim is to create a pleasant atmosphere and stimulate students' interest in literacy activities. After the bell rang, the teacher immediately instructed students to gather in the field together, increasing interaction and awareness of the importance of literacy. The activity then continues with the habit of reading short letters collectively, which can increase students' motivation and activeness in reading. Next, more diverse literacy familiarization activities are introduced to help students get used to various aspects of literacy, including reading, writing, and discussing. The teacher reads the story in front of the students with interesting expressions to improve their imagination and understanding of the content of the story. During the reading, the teacher also asks trigger questions to stimulate discussion and ensure student understanding. After the story is finished, the teacher reviews the content of the story by asking several additional questions, so that students can reflect on their understanding. With these steps, it is hoped that students will not only get used to literacy activities but also improve their reading skills significantly. This program aims to foster a culture of literacy in schools, increase the capacity of school residents to become more literate, and make schools a fun learning park. Through various strategies such as storytelling and the SQ3R method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), this activity is expected to make a major contribution to students' overall development and prepare them to become lifelong learners.

Literacy habits in the morning have a significant impact in increasing the reading ability and interest of mentally retarded children. This activity not only functions as a daily routine, but also as a planned effort to create an inclusive and enjoyable learning environment. Children are invited to engage in various literacy activities designed specifically for them. For example, reading colorful picture books, listening to stories from teachers, or even participating in simple plays based on the stories they read. This activity not only introduces them to new vocabulary, but also helps them understand story structure and character development.

Through literacy habits in the morning, it not only focuses on developing reading skills, but also on forming children's character. It is hoped that by improving literacy skills, mentally retarded children will be more confident in communicating and interacting with the environment around them, which in turn will support their social and emotional development. This is an important step in creating a generation that is better prepared to face the challenges of the future.

2. METHODS

Qualitative research methods are used to investigate natural objective conditions, where the researcher acts as the main instrument. The data collection process was carried out in a translation (mixed) manner, while data analysis had an inductive nature. The results of qualitative research focus more on understanding meaning rather than generalization. This research does more than collect data; it involves a series of in-depth processes, such as asking relevant questions, collecting data from specific participants, and analyzing data inductively, starting from specific themes towards a more general understanding.

In addition, the meaning of the data obtained must be interpreted carefully to achieve a more holistic understanding.

Data analysis is a systematic data processing process that involves organizing, categorizing, and compiling data from interview results, field notes, and documentation into clear and easy-to-understand patterns, so that accurate conclusions can be drawn. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which aims to describe and analyze phenomena and then guess. The literacy habituation program for students with intellectual barriers at the SMPKh level does have more records, this is because there are quite a lot of students with intellectual barriers so researchers also obtain a lot of data to make more significant processing. Data obtained from interviews, observations and documentation will be analyzed using thematic analysis, to ensure the validity of the data, figure 1. Explain triangulation techniques in this research, namely by verifying data from various sources (interviews, observations and asking for feedback) by choosing a qualitative researcher method. can reveal more data in the field, this is also because the data found is data that contains enough data so that a descriptive approach is also very appropriate to be used in this research.



Figure 1. Flow Research

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to identify how the implementation of a literacy habituation program can develop the reading skills of students with intellectual disabilities at the SMPKh level. Data was obtained through observation, interviews with teachers and students, as well as analysis of documents related to literacy programs. This research was carried out for 2 months starting from September to November. Students carry out literacy activities every day by reading before learning time begins. This is in accordance with Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 23 of 2015. The literacy habituation program at SMPKh level is carried out every day.

This literacy habituation program has a positive impact in developing the reading skills of students with intellectual disabilities. As shown by the research results, students experienced significant improvements in their reading abilities, although there were variations from one student to another, depending on the level of intellectual obstacles they had. The success factor for literacy programs is a habituation-based approach that gradually introduces reading skills to students through repeated and consistent practice. Students with intellectual disabilities show significant improvements in their reading skills.

Before the learning program, most students had difficulty recognizing simple words, reading sentences, and understanding the content of the reading. Students responded positively to the literacy program implemented. Students became more enthusiastic in reading sessions and showed increased involvement in literacy activities. Students who were initially passive in reading activities began to show more interest and effort in participating in literacy activities.

However, although literacy activities bring positive results, there are still challenges that need to be overcome, such as (1) heterogeneity in students' ability levels which requires a more individual approach. Not all students with intellectual disabilities are at the same level of ability, thus requiring adjustments in the delivery of material and teaching methods, (2) time constraints are quite a significant obstacle. Literacy habits require a lot of time, especially to master reading skills. Therefore, schools need to consider adding literacy hours or preparing a more flexible schedule so that the habituation process can run more optimally. (3) limited school infrastructure, such as small classrooms or lack of adequate learning aids, has an impact on the effectiveness of literacy activities. This limitation affects students' comfort in participating in literacy activities optimally. (4) Students' lack of focus has a direct impact on the effectiveness of literacy activities. Students who cannot maintain their attention during literacy learning sessions are often unable to understand or absorb the material provided well. This causes them difficulty in following the overall learning process, so that their reading, writing and speaking skills do not develop optimally. The inability to focus also reduces students' opportunities to actively participate in discussions or group activities that could improve their social and communication skills. In addition, lack of focus can exacerbate feelings of frustration and increase feelings of inadequacy among students. This can create a negative cycle where students are increasingly reluctant to engage in literacy activities and can even reduce their motivation to learn further.

These obstacles show that although literacy activities have very important goals for the development of students with special needs, their implementation is still hampered by various factors. Limited resources, facilities and teacher skills are the main obstacles that need to be overcome so that literacy activities can be more effective. By understanding these obstacles, schools and education managers can design more appropriate solutions to optimize the implementation of literacy activities.

4. CONCLUSION

Education is the main key to the development of a country. One group that requires special attention in education is children with intellectual disabilities. Mental retardation is someone who has general intellectual dysfunction below average, namely an IQ of 84 or below according to the test. However, education in Indonesia faces various obstacles in providing education for students with special needs. Apart from that, the low quality of teaching received by students with special needs is also caused by a lack of teacher preparedness. To overcome this problem, literacy is needed because it provides the foundation for overall student growth. Reading and writing skills are necessary not only for academic success but also for the development of critical and analytical thinking skills that are important in everyday life.

To foster a positive environment and arouse students' interest in literacy activities, the process of adapting to literacy activities is carried out. Literacy habits in the morning have a significant impact in increasing the reading ability and interest of mentally retarded children. After we conducted research for approximately 2 months.

Literacy habituation program for SMPKh level. This program is carried out every day, the various activities are imtaq activities followed by charity activities, there are lecture activities and healthy eating activities.

The success factor for the literacy program is a habituation-based approach that gradually introduces reading skills to students through repeated and consistent practice. Students with intellectual disabilities show significant improvements in their reading skills. However, while this program has brought positive results, there are still challenges that need to be overcome. One of them is the heterogeneity of students' ability levels which requires a more individual approach. Not all students with intellectual disabilities are at the same level of ability, thus requiring adjustments in the delivery of material and teaching methods. Apart from that, time constraints are a significant obstacle. Literacy habits require a lot of time, especially to master reading skills.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

In this PLP activity, support is needed from all parties, including universities, schools, and PLP students themselves. All parties must create a good and mature communication and cooperation network so that this PLP activity is more focused and always under supervision. Things that become obstacles in this PLP activity can also be minimized so that the results that are attempted are achieved optimally. From the beginning of the release of PLP students to schools until the end of the withdrawal of PLP students back to the university must be monitored periodically so that universities and schools establish good cooperation. The systematics and implementation of the PLP activity itself must also be periodically evaluated so that things that routinely become obstacles in its implementation will not reappear in future PLP activities.

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