

The Effectiveness of Reading Corners in Improving Literacy in Senior High Schools

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Abstract: Reading and writing skills are essential components of literacy and serve as fundamental competencies that students must possess. Unfortunately, literacy levels in Indonesia remain relatively low. Both internal and external factors contribute to students' lack of interest in reading and writing. Internal factors stem from individual aspects such as learning motivation, while external factors involve environmental conditions and the availability of supporting facilities. The School Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Sekolah/GLS) is a school initiative designed to accommodate students in developing writing skills and providing simple reading spaces in each classroom or school area. This program aims to cultivate reading and writing habits to enhance student engagement in literacy activities. This study was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Belimbing Hulu with a sample of 97 students. The objective was to examine and describe the effectiveness of reading corners in improving students' literacy skills, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation. The study employed a School Action Research (SAR) approach consisting of two action cycles, each comprising planning, implementation, observation, interviews, reflection, and documentation stages. The findings indicate that the reading corner program had a positive impact: the school's literacy report score increased from 41.18 in Cycle I to 79.17 in Cycle II; students became more confident in writing and reading their work aloud to peers; and they showed enthusiasm for the School Literacy Movement (GLS). Therefore, it can be concluded that implementing reading corners effectively improves students' literacy skills. The results of the reading corner questionnaire also showed an optimal increase in reading and writing frequency. Supporting factors included teacher involvement, diverse reading materials, and active student participation, while inhibiting factors involved limited resources and inconsistent reading schedules. The study concludes that reading corners effectively enhance literacy skills and recommends wider implementation across classrooms, increased material diversity, and structured literacy routines.

Keyword: Reading corner; literacy; reading interest; school literacy movement; motivation.

Introduction

Based on the national assessment results presented in the 2024 Education Report, the reading competence of students at SMA Negeri 1 Belimbing Hulu remains low. Students tend to spend more time using gadgets and social media rather than reading books. In fact, reading literacy is a key competency that supports critical, analytical, and communicative thinking skills (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). One of the strategies implemented by the school to foster a culture of literacy is establishing reading corners within the school environment. The School Literacy Movement (GLS) aims to facilitate students in writing activities and provide simple reading spaces in every classroom or school area, creating habits of reading and writing to enhance literacy engagement. Based on initial observations at SMA Negeri 1 Belimbing Hulu, reading corners were first introduced at the beginning of the 2025/2026 academic year as a result of a joint evaluation of the 2023 Education Report, which showed an 8.14% decline in literacy performance. This study aims to determine and describe the effectiveness of reading corner implementation in improving students' literacy at SMA Negeri 1 Belimbing Hulu, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors. The findings are expected to benefit school literacy program development, serve as a basis for GLS evaluation, and provide recommendations for other schools seeking to implement effective reading corners. The research followed the School Action Research (SAR) model with two cycles, each including planning, implementation, observation, interviews, reflection, and documentation. The results revealed that reading corners increased the school's literacy score by 37.99%, enhanced students' confidence in writing and presenting their work, and strengthened their enthusiasm toward GLS activities.

This study is grounded in several theoretical perspectives:

1. **Reading Engagement Theory** (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2019): Students read more effectively when they are motivated, engaged, and allowed to choose reading materials.
2. **Sociocultural Literacy Theory** (Vygotsky, 1978): Literacy is shaped by social interactions and the learning environment.
3. **Constructivist Learning Theory**: Students construct meaning through active engagement with texts and learning resources.
4. **Environmental Print Theory**: A rich print environment, such as reading corners, improves vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.
5. **PISA Reading Framework** (OECD, 2023): Literacy is strengthened when students are exposed to varied texts, have autonomy, and develop reading stamina.

Methods

This study applied a **School Action Research (SAR)** approach consisting of two action cycles, following the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

Type of Research: School Action Research (SAR) focusing on literacy improvement through reading corners.

Participants: 97 students from Grade XI at SMA Negeri 1 Belimbing Hulu and an Indonesian language teacher as collaborator.

Instruments: Observation sheets on students' reading activities, student reading interest questionnaires, reading literacy tests, and documentation (photos, journals, and book lists).

Data Sources: Data were collected from observations, questionnaires, interviews, and school literacy-related documents.

Instrument Validity and Reliability:

- **Content validity** was reviewed by two expert lecturers in literacy and educational assessment.
- **Reliability testing** using Cronbach Alpha resulted in $\alpha = 0.82$ indicating high reliability.
- Literacy tests were aligned with PISA reading descriptors.

Data Collection Procedures

- **Cycle duration:** 2 weeks per cycle (4 weeks total).
- Students used reading corners for 15 minutes at the start of each lesson.
- Observations and tests were conducted at the end of each cycle.

Results And Discussion

1. Increase in Students' Reading Interest

Questionnaire results showed a significant improvement in students' reading interest. Before the intervention, only 37% of students had a high interest in reading. After the second cycle, the percentage increased to 78%.

Table 1. Comparison of Students' Reading Interest Before and After Reading Corner Implementation

No Reading Interest Category Pre-Action (%) Post-Cycle II (%)

1	Very High	12	34
2	High	25	44
3	Moderate	40	19
4	Low	23	3

Source: Questionnaire results of Grade XI students.

2. Improvement in Reading Literacy Skills

The students' average literacy test score increased from 68 (before implementation) to 84 (after implementation). This indicates that consistent reading activities through the reading corner effectively enhanced students' comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking regarding reading materials (OECD, 2023).

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Supporting factors included teacher support, diverse reading materials, teacher supervision, and student involvement in book selection. The main challenges were the limited number of books. Some students initially lacked reading stamina and irregular reading schedules. These findings align with Suryani (2021), who emphasized that successful literacy development in schools relies heavily on a supportive and participatory learning environment.

4. Discussion with Theoretical Integration

The effectiveness of reading corners is supported by:

- **Constructivist theory**, stating students construct knowledge through continuous reading experiences.
- **Motivational theory**, which highlights that reading enjoyment increases when students feel ownership of the process.
- **Environmental theory**, emphasizing that physical spaces influence behavior and learning.

By combining structured routines (15-minute reading), book diversity, and teacher facilitation, reading corners successfully created a literacy-rich environment that improved both skills and habits.

Conclusion

The implementation of reading corners at SMA Negeri 1 Belimbing Hulu proved effective in improving students' reading literacy. There was a significant increase in both reading interest and literacy ability after two action cycles. Key factors

contributing to the program's success included active participation from teachers and students and the availability of relevant reading materials. The study recommends expanding reading corner implementation to all classrooms, diversifying reading materials, and scheduling regular reading sessions as part of the school's literacy habits. However, the study has several limitations, including its focus on a single school, a relatively short implementation period, and the limited quantity and variety of reading materials available in the reading corners. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a wider range of schools, a longer duration of implementation, and more diverse literacy resources. It is also advisable for schools to expand reading corners to all classrooms, establish regular reading schedules, and collaborate with local libraries to strengthen the literacy environment and ensure the sustainability of the program.

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