Analysis of Early Literacy Practices Based on Social Inclusion in Palembang

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore children's literacy activities at home that involve parenting in Indonesia from a social inclusion perspective. Design/methods/approach – This study uses a qualitative research method. Analyzing the results of interviews conducted on four families in Palembang, Indonesia, and using a critical theory perspective as the analysis. Findings – In the setting of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), literacy practices are not only carried out at school but also in the home and community. Based on the findings that we conducted on four families in Palembang, the practice of early literacy at home is very diverse. The practice of early literacy at home is also still experiencing problems, especially in the provision of media that supports children's literacy interests, especially in the fields of reading and numeracy. Research implications and limitations – Thus, it is necessary to synergize the role of families, institutions, and also the government in an effort to support the practice of early literacy based on social inclusion. Practical implications – so as to realize the interest in children's literacy in this country better

Key words: Early Literacy, Children, Social Inclusion

Introduction

Indonesia is a country known for its diversity in various aspects. However, instead of implementing the implementation of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, these differences often create contentious gaps. As it cannot be separated from the spotlight in the world of education, the issue that is currently being discussed is the issue of literacy. One of the issues, as reported by the OECD (2019), is that Indonesia was ranked 74th out of 79 countries in the PISA results organized by the OECD. Of course, this is not a pleasant achievement. Literacy is not only about reading but also about math and science. The lack of interest in literacy in Indonesia, which tends to remain unchanged, should be a big question mark for all parties. Many things are rumoured to be the cause of low literacy, such as the habit of being more comfortable with the oral culture, so that reading interest which is part of literacy, has not become a habit. On the other hand, there are also factors of access and willingness to media to support literacy practices related to the socio-economic level of the family.

Literacy is, of course, not just the ability to listen and understand spoken language. Furthermore, literacy includes the ability to communicate in the form of images and writing, which is formed by the experience of interacting with
the social environment (Stellakis, 2012). The early literacy in early childhood education and care (ECEC) context also involves many parties, including teachers and practitioners in the school environment, parents and other adults in the family, publishers, mass media, communities and also relevant ministries (Hammer, Farkas, & Maczuga, 2010; Sari, 2018). In this case, the quality and response of the home environment has a major influence on children's language and literacy skills. Through the home environment, children can cultivate language and literacy habits from an early age (Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005). As stated by Hood, Conlon, & Andrews (2008), there is a relationship built between preschool home literacy and children's literacy development; besides that, he also reveals that social factors also play a role, but few of us are aware of it.

Research on literacy practices is currently more focused on literacy movement activities in schools. With a very limited time, of course, it has little impact on the formation of literacy habits. Research on early literacy practices at home in a global context was conducted by Susperreguy, Douglas, Xu, Molina-Rojas, & LeFevre (2018); the results of their research stated that collaboration with home activities is needed when early childhood spends more time at home. Another study in a global context was also conducted by Curran & Kellogg (2016), which stated that among the inequalities in early literacy practice, it was also found that the literacy interest of boys tended to be below girls. In the context of Indonesia, literature research on reading literacy and gender aspects has been discussed by Lestari and Yulindrasari (2020), in their discussion stating that there is a need for equality in access to media literacy for boys and girls to dismantle reading myths. The disparity between boys and girls. Apart from that, research has been conducted by Ritonga & Sutapa (2020); the gender gap in literacy performance is influenced by various conditions, namely: a playing environment separated by gender; reading as a gendered activity; and attitude and behaviour. Meanwhile, research on literacy practices at home from the perspective of social inclusion has not been widely discussed and is important to do.

Method

This research is qualitative research. Analyzing the results of interviews conducted on four families in Palembang, Indonesia, and using a critical theory perspective as the analysis. Through this perspective, we can describe social constructivism related to difference and identity as a knowledge base for understanding subjectivity and other elements in the environment (Mac Naughton, 2005). For example, it can be seen from many discourses, in this case, the practice of early literacy, both competing and contradictory. As a result, some dominate, are perpetuated into beliefs that become established and accepted as "truths" (Foucault, 1972). This discourse concerns socio-economics, as well as the availability of media in every home, which will be discussed in this study as neoliberalism which is still present today.

Results and Discussion

Early Literacy at Home

Literacy practices in Indonesia are carried out in many ways. In most societies, storytelling is one of the ways used to spread norms, values, attitudes, and also culture to children. In addition to storytelling, other early literacy practices can also be done through a variety of letter and number games, playing writing in the sand, listening or watching storytelling, role-playing, and also whole language on many objects that children encounter every day at home (Lestari, 2020).

If it is associated with the concept of the children's education trilogy instilled by Ki Hajar Dewantara, this literacy practice involves synergy between schools, families and communities. So, if ECEC is considered important and even glorified as a golden period that should not be missed by each layer of its development, then what needs to be emphasized is not only activities in formal and non-formal institutions such as schools, but also at the level of informal institutions such as families and communities who also play an important role in this matter. Unfortunately, the community's perspective on early childhood education, which constructs the importance of investing in this golden age, makes the paradigm of the emergence of programs, both formal, non-formal and informal, which are not cheap, considered reasonable. Structures built within the framework of equalization often burden many layers who are indeed from different regions, economic classes, and so on (Jahng, 2013).

"At home, we introduce letters with posters that are available in the market, capital letters in one poster," said Mrs. Zalina

In conversations with other families, we found an excerpt from the dialogue with Mrs Puti,

"My father and I bought several sets of letter cards at Gramedia, and ever since we were little, we have given them pillow books", excerpts from an interview with Mrs Puti.
In the transcript of the interview dialogue above, we see an expansion of early literacy practices at home. The practices carried out by one family are different from those carried out by other families, although the aim is to introduce literacy from an early age. The media used are also of different materials and quality. We do not mean to compare, but without realizing it, there are neoliberalism practices that occur subtly here, such as marketization and privatization in the world of education (Adriany, V., & Newberry, J, 2021; Lestari, Nurhasanah, & Kurniati, 2021), such as the media market. Literacy, whose price is increasing day by day.

Furthermore, we also find good news that is not as bad as the issue of the low literacy rating of Indonesian children according to PISA results, such as the awareness of literacy practices at home and the environment around children. Even literacy activities at home have also been carried out not only with parents, siblings as adults have a supporting role in literacy activities; the same thing was also expressed by Kennedy, Ridgway, & Surman (2006), also in counting play activities and children's daily social interactions. -day in the home environment (Finn & Vandermaas-Peeler, 2013).

The partnership between parents and schools plays a role in the development of children’s literacy interests. The existence of a strong influence from the home environment in children's literacy and numeracy activities here is considered an effort for school readiness (Mehuishi et al., 2008). The relationship between the home and family environment in active participation in early childhood literacy activities can be developed through a variety of practices and games designed to foster children's literacy interest from an early age (Blevins-Knabe & Austin, 2016; Warren & Young, 2002).

Early literacy practices carried out at home tend to be done in the form of fun games, not exercises. As stated by Lehrl & Smidt, 2018; Lukie, Skwarchuk, LeFevre, & Sovinski (2014) that literacy activities at home are presented in various forms of games with children's interests and collaborative parental involvement in them will have an effect on the quality of children's literacy skills development from an early age. This negotiation of literacy practices at home gives a broader view that, in reality, it is very diverse. Neoliberalism is also strengthened in early childhood education through interventions carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Smith et al., 2016). The OECD promotes the human capital discourse through its emphasis on the knowledge economy. It adopts a technical approach that values 'objectivity, universality, predictability and what can be measured' (Moss et al., 2016 p. 346). So that the literacy activities they do become activities they love to become a fun habit.

Practice of Literacy Based on Social Inclusion

The collaborative relationship between school and home, where parents implement literacy activities at home, as we discussed above, has a positive impact on children's literacy interests. In practice, so far, the availability of games for literacy activities that are strived to be at home still favours media that are sold at relatively high prices in the children's media market. So often consider simple media less desirable. Mastery of early childhood literacy skills starts from the support of the literacy environment at home and school.

Instead of comparing and blaming the availability of media, which needs to be supported by the participation of the central and local governments, we also really need to see that the literacy practices carried out by each family will be clearly different. Based on the results we found in this study, this difference is marked by the socio-economic level of the family; although they occupy the same environment, the income and type of work of their parents are different. So that the literacy programs provided for lower-income families are not the same as those carried out by middle and upper-economic families.

Supporting the literacy model at home means that we are ready to provide a more complete framework/media that connects parental involvement in children’s literacy activities (Susperreguy et al., 2018). Literacy instruments at home are also often used as a reference in policy making that is juxtaposed with the national literacy movement. Where parents are educated for knowledge of literacy games, literacy activities at home, and numeracy and literacy attitudes and expectations for children's performance before entering elementary school (Iskandar, 2018; Susilo, Jimat & Wahyuni, 2016; Susperreguy et al., 2018). The literacy success rating in a country is also measured by comparisons, judged by numbers, which one is better and which one is still lacking, through the PISA test from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Through the OECD, the international testing system is documented with numerical data, which then compares it between one country and another and ranks them in order. In a global context, this method is believed to be the best and perhaps the most correct way to help a country improve its current and future education programs (Moss et al., 2016).

Instead of constantly comparing the two sides from the point of view of objectivity, this study offers that early literacy practices with a social inclusion perspective have been and will continue to be implemented if we look at existing literacy practices from their subjectivity. We realize that providing media and literacy activities is not easy; for some people from the middle to upper economic class, it is not a problem. However, for families from the lower middle economic class, this is a struggle. When their economy is only at a sufficient level. Where the salary earned is only enough to buy basic and primary needs for the family, then where can they buy literacy media at home? They can provide books and games for their children, but quietly they have to hold back the sides of their main needs. In this context, we can help each other, from the upper family can share media with the lower family, the community
can organize more open reading rooms and free fairy tales in the field, the government can help provide media such as books and others to schools, libraries village level, and perhaps even assistance for each low-income family. This synergy is needed; all parties have a shared responsibility, especially the government, to ensure equitable access to education, such as the distribution of media in all circles, both at the institutional level to the family level. So that early literacy practices can have an optimal impact on children's literacy interests from an early age.

**Conclusion**

In the discussion of this article, it is concluded that when we make children's literacy an important element of an education today, then all elements need to be involved to achieve it. Including a collaborative parenting style that involves the role of parents, adults around the child and the home environment as a place where children spend most of their time every day. This negotiation of literacy practices at home gives a broader view that, in reality, it is very diverse.

However, current literacy practices and issues related to early literacy are still inseparable from the various practices of neoliberalism. For example, the success of a country in literacy is still only seen from the PISA ranking carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Smith et al., 2016). This OECD contains a practice where something is only valued in terms of 'objectivity, universality, predictability, and all that is related to things that can be measured' (Moss et al., 2016, p. 346). Although since 2015, the United Nations has launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which in point number four focus on eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity and equality for all (UN, n.d.); however, to ensure that each country has succeeded in achieving this goal, it needs to provide data presented in figures to show it. However, efforts to provide more flexible social inclusion media and literacy game tools are needed so that children are familiar with loving literacy activities from an early age, regardless of their background.

**References**


