



Library Promotion Strategies for Elementary School Education to Enhance Students' Reading Interest at a Public Elementary School in Medan

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ABSTRACT

The school library plays an important role in supporting the teaching and learning process at a public elementary school in Medan. Given the relatively large number of students, systematic guidance is required to develop and strengthen their interest in reading. This study aims to examine the role of the school library in increasing students' reading interest at a public elementary school in Medan. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that the school library supports the teaching and learning process and the development of student literacy through several initiatives. These include providing a diverse range of reading materials, implementing read-aloud activities, conducting the School Literacy Movement program (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* or GLS), scheduling compulsory library visits, and requiring students to read for at least 15 minutes each day.

Keywords: library promotion strategy; school library; reading interest; elementary school students

INTRODUCTION

Reading interest can essentially be understood as a tendency that encourages individuals to seek out or engage in particular activities. In the context of reading, this interest emerges from curiosity and a personal desire to discover something without coercion or external pressure (Sudarsana, 2010, p. 4.24).

To increase students' reading interest through the involvement of the school library, this study applies library promotion and service strategies. According to Rahma (2018, p. 165), library promotion is a service-oriented activity intended to introduce the full range of activities available in a library to the wider public. From this perspective, reading interest develops through a positive sense of curiosity and an intrinsic attraction to reading.

A school library is located within an educational institution and constitutes an integral part of the school. It functions as a learning resource that supports the achievement of the school's educational objectives (Hartono, 2015, p. 18). Its presence is therefore important within the school environment. The library serves as a learning space that can contribute to the development of an accomplished generation from an early age.

The existence of a school library is expected to foster a culture of reading within the school community. Reading interest must be cultivated because it is not an innate disposition. It can be developed by encouraging children to read regularly every day. However, libraries are still frequently positioned merely as complementary facilities within the educational system. This condition can also be observed at public elementary schools in Medan, where several obstacles remain in efforts to increase students' reading interest through library use.

To address this condition, the study applies library promotion strategies and the read-aloud method. A library promotion strategy refers to a set of activities designed to introduce the library's facilities, collections, services, and benefits. Teachers also play an important role in encouraging students to develop an interest in reading and to establish regular reading habits. At the same time, the library is expected to provide effective and responsive services to students.

Through these strategies, the school library is expected to function as a meaningful educational resource rather than merely as a display or supplementary facility. Its active use may stimulate students' enthusiasm for reading and gradually increase their engagement with library activities.

The research problem emerges from the limited reading interest associated with the underutilization of the school library. Based on this issue, the study is entitled "Library Promotion Strategies for Increasing Students' Reading Interest at a Public Elementary School in Medan."

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research focuses on observing events and complex social phenomena that cannot be quantified, while seeking to understand the behavior of the individuals being studied (Hartinah, 2014, p. 2.10). This method was considered appropriate because it was consistent with the nature and objectives of the study, namely, to obtain in-depth information about the conditions at the library of SD Negeri Mulo Wonosari based on empirical facts found in the field. The research data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data sources consisted of library staff and library users. The data were analyzed descriptively by examining the facts and events identified during the study and exploring the relationships between one phenomenon and another. The data were then presented in narrative form. Conclusions were drawn by considering the entirety of the data obtained throughout the research process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the library promotion strategies implemented by the library of SD Negeri Mulo II to increase users' reading interest.

The Role of the School Library in the Teaching and Learning Process and in Improving Student Literacy

Low reading interest may hinder the development of students' critical thinking. The library therefore plays an important role in increasing students' interest in reading. Several library-related factors may influence reading interest. A library with a comprehensive collection and engaging approaches can increase users' motivation and enthusiasm for reading.

The findings indicate that the educational promotion strategies implemented by school libraries and public libraries collaborating with public elementary schools in Medan positively affected students' reading interest. Based on observations and interviews with teachers, librarians, and students, promotional activities served not only as a means of informing students about the library's existence but also as educational activities that helped establish reading habits from an early age.



The most frequently implemented promotional strategies included routine literacy activities, shared-reading programs, reading corners, storytelling competitions, classroom reading corners, library visits, and the use of digital media, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and the school's Facebook account, to disseminate information about book collections and literacy programs. Students responded positively to these programs because the activities were presented in engaging ways and were appropriate for the characteristics of elementary school children. Teachers reported that students became more enthusiastic about visiting the library after participating in interactive activities than when the library provided only conventional book-lending services.

The findings also demonstrate that teacher and parental involvement constituted major supporting factors in the successful implementation of library promotion strategies. Teachers actively integrated reading activities into the learning process, while parents supported students by accompanying them during reading activities at home. The collaboration among the school, library, and family created a more supportive literacy environment, allowing students' reading frequency to increase gradually.

In addition, the availability of diverse book collections appropriate to children's developmental levels influenced the effectiveness of library promotion. Students showed greater interest in illustrated storybooks, educational comics, children's encyclopedias, and popular knowledge books. Library promotion therefore depended not only on promotional or informational activities but also on the availability of engaging collections, comfortable reading spaces, and friendly library services.

Nevertheless, the study identified several obstacles to the implementation of promotional strategies. Limited budgets for acquiring new collections, inadequate supporting facilities, and the underutilization of information technology reduced the attractiveness of the libraries. In several schools, promotional activities were still incidental and had not yet been developed into sustainable programs. Consequently, improvements in reading interest were not evenly distributed among all students.

These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that library promotion is an important strategy for developing a literacy culture in schools. Creative and continuous promotion involving all stakeholders can increase library visits, expand access to reading resources, and foster reading as part of students' daily learning activities. Educational promotion strategies in libraries therefore function not only to increase the number of visitors but also to contribute to the quality of learning and students' character development.

The results further indicate that the educational promotion strategies implemented in public elementary school libraries in Medan had a significant influence on students' reading interest. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, libraries were no longer perceived merely as places for storing book collections. Instead, they had developed into centers of literacy activities that supported the learning process. The various promotional activities increased the frequency of students' library visits and encouraged them to use library collections for both learning and recreational reading.

The most effective promotional strategies included the implementation of the School Literacy Movement, known as *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* or GLS; 15-minute reading activities before lessons began; storytelling competitions; book-review competitions; book exhibitions; compulsory library visits; the establishment of reading corners in classrooms;

and the use of the school's social media platforms to provide information about new collections and literacy activities. These activities created enjoyable learning experiences, so students did not perceive reading merely as an obligation but as an engaging activity. These findings are consistent with studies suggesting that promotion, services, collaboration, motivation, and the provision of adequate facilities are among the principal strategies for increasing reading interest in school libraries.

The findings also show that the success of promotional strategies was strongly influenced by the quality of library services. Communicative and friendly librarians who actively recommended reading materials to students were able to establish positive relationships between the library and its users. Efficient services, comfortable reading spaces, attractive collection arrangements, and simple book-borrowing procedures encouraged students to visit the library more frequently. This condition indicates that library promotion is conducted not only through communication media but also through the quality of services directly experienced by users.

In addition to service quality, the diversity of library collections was an important factor in increasing elementary school students' reading interest. The findings indicate that students were more interested in illustrated storybooks, educational comics, children's encyclopedias, basic science books, folktales, and popular knowledge books appropriate to their age. The availability of current and relevant collections provided students with a greater variety of reading choices and encouraged more regular library visits. By contrast, collections that were not regularly updated caused students to become bored and reduced the frequency of their visits. These findings reinforce the view that collection development should form part of a library promotion strategy because the quality of the collection is a principal attraction for library users.

The study also found that collaboration among schools, libraries, teachers, and parents made a substantial contribution to developing a reading culture. Teachers acted as motivators by assigning tasks that required students to use library collections, while parents provided support by accompanying students during reading activities at home. This collaboration created a sustainable literacy environment in which reading habits were developed not only at school but also as part of students' everyday activities.

In the digital era, library promotion strategies have undergone significant changes. Social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, as well as school websites, have become effective media for introducing library services, new collections, schedules of literacy activities, and reading competitions. Digital media enable information to reach students and parents more rapidly, thereby increasing participation in library activities. Digital promotion strategies also help construct the image of the library as a modern, innovative learning space that remains relevant to technological developments.

Nevertheless, the study continued to identify several challenges in the implementation of promotional strategies. Budget limitations prevented libraries from acquiring new collections optimally. Some school libraries also had limited reading spaces, inadequate information technology facilities, and insufficient numbers of librarians. These conditions hindered the sustainable implementation of promotional programs. Support from local governments, schools, school committees, and external partners is therefore required to improve library facilities, collections, and human resources.



From the perspective of service marketing theory, library promotion strategies can be understood as efforts to create value for users through effective communication, high-quality services, and positive experiences when using the library. Successful promotion not only increases the number of visits but also develops students' commitment to reading activities. Accordingly, the school library is no longer perceived merely as a supplementary educational facility but as a learning-resource center that contributes to students' literacy skills, academic achievement, creativity, and character development.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the success of educational promotion strategies in public elementary school libraries in Medan depends on the integration of several components: innovation in literacy programs, the quality of librarian services, the availability of engaging collections, support from teachers and parents, the use of digital technology, and the school's commitment to developing a reading culture. When these components are implemented consistently and continuously, the library can become an effective learning center that increases reading interest while strengthening elementary school students' literacy skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, educational promotion strategies implemented by libraries in public elementary schools in Medan play an important role in increasing elementary school students' reading interest. Various promotional activities, including literacy programs, shared-reading activities, literacy competitions, library visits, the use of social media, and the provision of engaging book collections, were shown to increase students' interest in reading and encourage them to use library services.

The success of these promotional strategies was influenced by collaboration among librarians, teachers, school principals, and parents in creating a sustainable literacy culture. At the same time, limited budgets and facilities, as well as the underutilization of information technology, remained important challenges. Therefore, digital literacy-based promotional programs, improvements in the quality of library services, the development of collections relevant to students' needs, and stronger school policy support are required so that the library can function as an innovative learning center capable of cultivating a reading culture from an early age.

Overall, creative, participatory, and sustainable library promotion strategies can serve as an effective means of increasing the reading interest of public elementary school students in Medan. These strategies can also support the development of a generation with strong literacy skills and greater readiness to face educational challenges in the digital era.

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