

A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MORNING LITERACY PROGRAM

M. Yayan Artha Putra¹ Siti Aisyah² Juliani³
Universitas Hamzanwadi

Email: arthafath@gmail.com

Abstract: This descriptive qualitative study examines the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic senior high school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Through observations and interviews with 12th-grade students, the study explores how limited resources and geographic isolation shape classroom literacy practices. Findings show that the program functions mainly as a daily routine, with silent reading of repetitive texts and minimal teacher facilitation, resulting in surface-level comprehension, low motivation, and restricted higher-order thinking. Students report challenges such as short reading periods, limited text variety, and the absence of discussion or clarification, which contribute to emotional disengagement and uneven learning experiences. Viewed through social constructivist and critical pedagogical perspectives, the study emphasizes the need for more interactive and contextually relevant activities to foster deeper understanding and equitable participation. The research calls for reforms that strengthen meaningful literacy development in rural Islamic schools. Keywords: critical pedagogy; interactive literacy; morning literacy program; rural literacy; social constructivism; student engagement	Article History Received: Desember 2025 Reviewed: Desember 2025 Published: Desember 2025 Plagiarism Checker No 727 Prefix DOI: Prefix DOI: 10.8734/sindoro.v1i2.360 Copyright: Author Publish by: SINDORO  This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.
--	---

INTRODUCTION

Literacy goes beyond the simple ability to read and write; it plays a vital role in enabling individuals to function effectively in everyday life, gain knowledge, and communicate meaningfully with others. From understanding written instructions to accessing information through news and digital media, literacy supports critical thinking and active participation in society. Within educational contexts, particularly through morning literacy programs designed to promote regular reading activities, literacy becomes central to shaping students’ long-term learning habits and personal development. Research has shown that strong literacy skills are associated with improved economic opportunities and social mobility (UNESCO, 2015). In addition, early literacy interventions have been found to reduce learning inequalities and strengthen students’ academic performance as well as emotional development (National Literacy Trust, 2014). For this reason, literacy is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a key factor in empowering individuals to build their futures.

In Indonesia, a culturally and linguistically diverse archipelago, literacy plays an important role in strengthening social participation and improving educational and economic opportunities. Although the national adult literacy rate has reached approximately 95%, significant disparities remain, particularly in remote and disadvantaged areas where access to quality education is constrained by geographical barriers, socioeconomic conditions, and gender inequality (UNESCO, 2015). School-based initiatives such as morning literacy programs are therefore essential in addressing these challenges by promoting regular reading practices and developing students’ foundational literacy skills. Such programs contribute not only to reducing

illiteracy but also to preparing individuals to participate more effectively in Indonesia's expanding economy and democratic society, where literacy is necessary for engaging with both local and global information (World Bank, 2014). While oral traditions remain an important part of Indonesian culture, strengthening literacy remains critical to ensuring that individuals are equipped with the skills needed to communicate, learn, and participate actively in modern society.

Located in Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), MA NW Kotaraja is an Islamic senior high school that plays an important role in providing education for students in a rural setting. The school implements a morning literacy program as a daily routine conducted across all grades at the beginning of the school day, usually around 7:00 a.m., with the purpose of establishing a learning-focused atmosphere. During the activity, teachers distribute printed "literacy sheets" containing short texts or news articles related to current issues, local context, or general knowledge, without accompanying questions or structured reading exercises. Students spend approximately 15-20 minutes reading the materials either individually or in small groups before regular lessons begin, allowing them to engage in independent reading practice. The program reflects an effort to promote consistent literacy activity in a low-resource rural environment, where access to learning materials is limited (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2020). Through repeated exposure to informational texts, the program aims to strengthen students' reading habits and familiarity with written information (World Bank, 2014; World Bank, 2021). Previous research also indicates that similar literacy initiatives in rural Indonesian schools can improve students' reading engagement when adapted to local conditions, although their effectiveness may vary depending on teacher preparedness and resource availability (Suryadarma & Jones, 2020; Prasetyo & Nugroho, 2022).

At MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic senior high school located in Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), literacy is expected to support students' academic development; however, several constraints limit the effectiveness of its implementation. Although the school has implemented a morning literacy program, the activity tends to function largely as a routine rather than as a meaningful instructional practice, resulting in minimal impact on students' higher-order skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative expression (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2015; Prasetyo & Nugroho, 2022). Contributing factors include limited learning resources, a shortage of qualified teachers, and an instructional focus that prioritizes mechanical reading over interactive and reflective engagement (World Bank, 2014; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). Moreover, the lack of inclusive materials and insufficient attention to students' social and emotional development further hinder literacy achievement, particularly among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (UNICEF, 2013; Asian Development Bank, 2015). These conditions indicate that although the program is in place, its current implementation does not yet adequately support meaningful literacy development among students in this setting.

Although literacy programs have been widely discussed in national policy and large-scale assessments, previous studies have primarily focused on outcomes such as literacy rates and test scores rather than classroom level implementation. Large-scale evaluations by UNESCO (2015) and the World Bank (2014), for instance, emphasize national literacy indicators in Indonesia while overlooking the realities of daily classroom practice. Similarly, Suryadarma and Jones (2020) examine trends in student achievement across Indonesia but do not explore how literacy programs are enacted at the school level. Studies on Islamic education (e.g., Prasetyo & Nugroho, 2022) highlight cognitive impacts but rely heavily on quantitative measures with limited attention to teacher-student interaction, while OECD reports (2015) focus on policy and skills development with little detail on routine instruction. As a result, little is known about

how daily literacy activities are implemented in rural Islamic secondary schools and how students and teachers experience these programs. This study addresses this gap by offering a descriptive qualitative account of the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja.

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study is to explore and describe the implementation of the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic school in Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), Indonesia, with a focus on its effectiveness in fostering literacy skills among students. The study aims to uncover gaps where the program serves more as a formality than a catalyst for meaningful cognitive development, such as critical thinking and real-world application (OECD, 2015; Rukmini & Sri, 2014). Ultimately, this research seeks to provide insights into how such programs can be improved to better support rural learners, bridging literacy divides and enhancing educational equity in underserved communities. This aligns with broader efforts to address literacy issues in Indonesia, as highlighted in prior studies (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2014; Suyanto, 2013).

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how the morning literacy program is implemented at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic secondary school. This design is well-suited for capturing participants' experiences and the everyday realities of the program without imposing preconceived hypotheses, allowing for a rich and holistic understanding of its practice (Merriam, 2015). Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis to examine daily routines, participant perspectives, and challenges in implementation, addressing gaps in classroom-level literacy research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By analyzing patterns and themes, the study provides insights grounded in the real-world context of rural schools in Indonesia, highlighting the authentic dynamics of the program while maintaining methodological rigor (Maxwell, 2020).

The study was conducted at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic senior high school (Madrasah Aliyah) in Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, highlighting the challenges of implementing literacy programs amid geographic isolation and limited resources (UNESCO, 2015). The population includes all students from grades 10 to 12, totaling around 300 individuals across various academic streams. For this study, participants were purposively selected from the 12th-grade especially the science class cohort to provide insights from students nearing graduation, allowing an in-depth understanding of the morning literacy program's influence on their cognitive and emotional development. The research was carried out from September to December 2025.

This study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability technique chosen to select participants who are information-rich and directly relevant to the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja. The sample consists of 12th-grade students who regularly participate in the daily program, providing insights into their experiences and the program's impact as they approach graduation. This approach emphasizes depth over representativeness, aligning with qualitative research principles that prioritize participants able to offer detailed, contextual knowledge of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Focusing on these students allows the study to capture authentic perspectives on the program's routines and challenges, addressing gaps in classroom-level literacy research in rural Islamic schools.

The primary data collection instruments in this descriptive qualitative study are observations and interviews, selected to capture detailed insights into the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja. Observations include both participant and non-participant

approaches, with the researcher systematically recording daily routines, student engagement, teacher facilitation, and classroom interactions using field notes and checklists (Merriam, 2015). This allows for an objective view of the program as it naturally occurs, highlighting patterns and gaps between planned and actual practices. Complementing this, semi-structured interviews with 12th-grade students use open-ended questions to explore their experiences, perceptions of program effectiveness, and challenges, providing rich, subjective insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulating these instruments enhances credibility, combining observed behaviors with interpretive depth to meet qualitative research rigor.

The study followed a systematic procedure to conduct a descriptive qualitative exploration of the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja. It began with problem identification, established through a review of literature and preliminary observations, which revealed that while literacy programs are emphasized in national policies, their classroom-level implementation in rural Islamic schools often formal with minimal cognitive benefits is not well understood (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2014). Next, the population and sample were determined: the population included all students in grades 10-12, with purposive sampling selecting 12th-grade students who consistently participated, ensuring insights from senior learners on the program's long-term impact. Data were collected through observations of morning sessions and semi-structured interviews with selected participants over four weeks to document routines, engagement, and perceptions. Triangulating these methods enhanced the study's validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2015). Finally, thematic analysis was used to describe program implementation, identify gaps, and draw implications for improving literacy education in rural settings, leading to actionable recommendations based on the findings.

Data analysis in this descriptive qualitative study was conducted using thematic analysis, a flexible and inductive approach that allows for the identification of patterns, themes, and meanings within the collected data from observations and interviews at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic senior high school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The process began with data familiarization, where transcripts from interviews and field notes from observations were repeatedly reviewed to gain an overall understanding of the morning literacy program's implementation, immersing the researcher in the daily rhythms and voices of the students and teachers in this remote setting. Initial codes were generated to categorize key elements, such as program routines, student engagement, and perceived gaps, followed by grouping these codes into broader themes, like "formality over substance" or "limited cognitive output," which emerged organically from the data rather than being imposed, reflecting the authentic experiences of participants. Themes were refined through iterative comparison and discussion among researchers to ensure credibility, with member checking involving participants to validate interpretations and make sure their stories were represented accurately, fostering a collaborative and respectful process. This method prioritized descriptive depth, enabling a rich portrayal of the program's dynamics in a rural Islamic school context, while maintaining trustworthiness through audit trails and reflexive journaling that captured the researcher's evolving insights and personal reflections on the challenges of literacy in isolated areas (Merriam, 2015). The analysis culminated in a coherent narrative that addressed the study's purpose of uncovering implementation nuances and informing educational improvements, ultimately highlighting the human side of literacy education in a place where resources are scarce but the spirit of learning remains strong, and where each student's journey contributes to a broader understanding of how such programs can be adapted to local needs. To ensure the trustworthiness of this descriptive qualitative study on the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic senior high school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, several strategies were employed with a focus on building genuine connections and authenticity in a context

where trust is essential for meaningful research. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement in the field, spending four weeks observing morning sessions and conducting interviews, which allowed the researcher to build rapport with students and teachers, truly understanding their perspectives beyond surface-level responses, and member checking, where participants reviewed and confirmed interpretations to ensure their voices were honored and not misrepresented (Merriam, 2015). Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the rural Islamic school context, including details about the geographic isolation, cultural nuances of Lombok, and the unique challenges of implementing literacy programs in a madrasah setting, enabling readers to judge applicability to similar settings in Indonesia or beyond. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail documenting all research decisions, data collection, and analysis steps, creating a transparent path that others could follow and replicate if needed, while confirmability was promoted via reflexive journaling to acknowledge and mitigate researcher biases, such as preconceptions about rural education or assumptions about Islamic schooling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, triangulation of observations, interviews, and documents enhanced overall rigor, resulting in findings that authentically reflect the implementation of the literacy program and resonate with the lived experiences of those involved. This approach not only upheld methodological standards but also fostered a sense of empathy and respect for the participants' realities in a challenging yet vibrant educational environment, ensuring that the study contributes meaningfully to improving literacy practices in underserved areas.

Finding

The results of this study illuminate how the morning literacy program unfolds in the everyday life of MA NW Kotaraja. Drawing on observations and conversations with 12th-grade students, the analysis reveals how they actually experience the routine, what they gain from it, and where they feel its limitations. Rather than presenting the program in abstract terms, the themes that emerged reflect the rhythms of a rural school morning the quiet reading sessions, the moments of disengagement, the effort to make sense of unfamiliar texts, and the constraints shaped by limited resources. Together, these findings offer a grounded understanding of how the program functions in practice and provide a clearer picture of the opportunities it creates, as well as the gaps that still need attention to strengthen literacy development in this setting.

Routine vs. Meaningful Learning (“Formality over Substance”)

To understand how students experience the morning literacy program, several interviews were conducted. The students were asked to describe what they usually do during the activity, how they feel about the routine, and what happens in the classroom while the program takes place. Their responses provide a direct picture of their daily literacy practices. The statements below present the interview results as expressed by the students.

“Every morning we read the literacy sheets, but there is no discussion provided, so it feels more like a routine activity than a literacy process.” (S3, science 12th student).

“Sometimes I want to ask questions about the reading, but there is no body to discuss with or ask to.” (S2, science 12th student).

“I rarely understand the text fully because we read for only a short time before starting the class.” (S7, science 12th student).

The observation also indicated that students engaged with the literacy sheets only by reading them silently, without any follow-up discussion or clarification related to the material. Because the activity was limited to silent reading, there was no visible output or indication of their comprehension. In addition, the time allocated for the task was very limited, which further constrained students' opportunities to process the content meaningfully. No questions could be asked during the activity, as there was no mechanism or facilitator available for students to seek clarification about anything they had read.

Engagement and Motivation Levels ("Variable Interest and Participation")

To explore how students participate in the morning literacy program, interviews were also conducted to gather their descriptions of interest, motivation, and involvement during the activity. Students shared how they usually respond to the reading routine, what makes them engage or disengage, and how their level of participation varies from day to day. The following statements present their responses as expressed during the interviews.

"I usually read, but not very deeply. There's nothing to do after reading, so I just read to finish." (S12, science 12th student).

"I want to enjoy the activity, but sometimes the text feels too long or not "my style" for me." (S2, science 12th student).

"If the material is something I like, I pay more attention. But if it's not, I just finish it quickly." (S2, science student).

Direct observations showed that many students engaged with the reading material in a minimal and unserious manner. Several students appeared to skim the text quickly without attempting to understand its content, largely because they were not interested in the material provided. Their reading behavior suggested that the activity was performed mainly to fulfill the routine requirement of the morning literacy program rather than to support meaningful comprehension.

Cognitive Impact ("Limited Higher-Order Skill Development")

To understand how the morning literacy program affects students' thinking and comprehension skills, interviews were conducted to gather their descriptions of what they learn from the activity. Students were asked whether the reading routine helps them analyze, interpret, or reflect on the material. Their responses provide a direct view of how the program supports or limits their cognitive development. The following statements present the interview results as expressed by the students.

"I don't get to ask questions or discuss the material, so I don't know whether I understand it correctly." (S6, science 12th student).

"I usually just read the text, but I don't really think deeply about it because there's no task after reading." (S1, science 12th student),

"There's no activity that makes me think critically. We only read and then move on to the next lesson." (S2, science 12th student).

Direct and constant observations indicated that students did not engage deeply with the reading material. Many read the texts only at a surface level and showed no signs of analyzing or interpreting the content. The absence of discussion or sharing activities prevented students

from asking questions, clarifying meaning, or processing the information more critically. As a result, opportunities for higher-order thinking were limited, and the activity remained focused on basic reading rather than deeper cognitive development.

Challenges and Barriers (“Resource Constraints and Short Reading Periods”)

To identify the obstacles that students face during the morning literacy program, interviews were conducted to gather their descriptions of the conditions that affect their reading process. Students were asked about the availability of materials, the amount of time provided, and any limitations that influence how they participate in the activity. Their responses highlight the practical barriers they encounter. The following statements present the interview results as expressed by the students.

“The literacy sheets are the only material we use, and they are repeated often, so it becomes less engaging for me.” (S3, science 12th student).

“I think the program could help more if we had more varied reading materials, because maybe, if we can request the material that we like, it would be better.” (S15, science 12th student).

Constant observations showed that the limited time allocated for the morning literacy program constrained students’ ability to engage meaningfully with the material. Many students appeared to rush through the reading task because the duration was too short to support deeper comprehension. The literacy sheets provided were often repetitive and not aligned with students’ interests, which further reduced their attention and motivation. These conditions created practical barriers that affected how students participated in the activity.

Social and Emotional Influence (“Emotional Engagement and Equity Issues”)

To understand how the morning literacy program affects students socially and emotionally, interviews were conducted to gather their descriptions of how the activity makes them feel and how it influences their interactions in the classroom. Students were asked about their level of comfort, the atmosphere during the activity, and whether they felt supported or treated fairly while participating. Their responses offer a direct view of the emotional and social aspects of the program. The following statements present the interview results as expressed by the students.

“The program feels routine, and emotionally, I don’t feel very connected to the reading because there is nothing after reading it.” (S11, science 12th student).

“I feel more comfortable when the material is interesting, but when it is not, I don’t give much focus and easily bored.” (S2, science 12th student).

Direct observations indicated that many students struggled to engage with the reading material because they lacked sufficient prior knowledge to understand the content. This gap made several students appear less serious or less confident during the activity, as they were unable to connect the text with anything familiar. Some students seemed marginalized in the process, quietly completing the routine without showing signs of comprehension or emotional involvement. The lack of support or clarification during the activity further contributed to this uneven experience across the class.

Recommendations for Improvement (“Desire for Interactive and Contextually Relevant Activities”)

To gather students’ suggestions for improving the morning literacy program, interviews included questions about the types of activities they would prefer and the changes they believe could make the routine more meaningful. Students were invited to share what would help them understand the material better and stay more engaged during the reading session. Their responses highlight the kinds of adjustments they feel would enhance the program. The following statements present these suggestions as expressed by the students.

“I think it would help if we could discuss the text afterward, even briefly, so we can understand it better.” (S3, science 12th student)

“It would be more interesting if the reading materials were connected to our daily lives or topics we like.” (S15, science 12th student)

“If the teacher could explain a little before or after reading, it would make the activity more meaningful.” (S11, science 12th student)

“Having a chance to ask questions or share our opinions would make the program feel more interactive.” (S6, science 12th student)

“Group or pair discussions could help us understand the text more because we can learn from each other.” (S4, science 12th student).

Observations in the classroom showed that many students moved through the reading activity with little opportunity to engage beyond the text itself. After finishing their “literacy sheets,” they had no space to ask questions or talk through ideas that might have helped them understand the material more fully. Several moments suggested that students were curious but unsure where to direct their questions, as no discussion or short clarification session was provided. These patterns indicate that the program could benefit from simple interactive steps such as guided questions or brief exchanges led by teachers to make the activity feel more meaningful and supportive for learners.

Discussions**Routine vs. Meaningful Learning (“Formality over Substance”)**

The theme “Routine vs. Meaningful Learning (“Formality over Substance”)” reveals that the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, prioritizes routine over meaningful learning. Students engage in silent reading of literacy sheets without follow-up discussions, clarifications, or opportunities to ask questions, resulting in no visible comprehension output. Limited time and lack of facilitators make the activity feel like a mere formality, as students struggle to understand texts fully and express frustration over the lack of interactive elements, as evidenced by quotes from 12th-grade science students who describe it as a routine without true literacy processes.

Interpretively, this theme highlights how the program fails to foster deep cognitive engagement, leaving students feeling alienated from literacy’s potential for critical thinking and personal growth in a rural setting. It aligns with Vygotsky’s theory of meaningful learning (2018), which stresses social interaction for cognitive development, and Freire’s critique of banking education (2018), where knowledge is passively received without active participation. The findings relate to previous research, such as Sari (2019) on superficial literacy routines in

rural Indonesian schools and Widodo et al. (2020) on formal practices in Islamic schools, but emphasize the unique challenges of geographic isolation in Lombok, where formality overshadows substance, hindering long-term literacy development.

Practically, these findings suggest redesigning the program to include interactive elements like group discussions, extended time, and trained facilitators to promote meaningful learning. Schools can collaborate with communities to integrate culturally relevant materials and conduct regular evaluations to ensure engagement. This contributes to improving literacy in rural Islamic schools, fostering student motivation and cognitive skills, and addressing gaps in underserved areas like Lombok for broader educational equity.

Engagement and Motivation Levels (“Variable Interest and Participation”)

The theme "Cognitive Impact (“Limited Higher-Order Skill Development”)" illustrates how the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, fails to foster advanced cognitive skills among students. Interviews reveal that students engage in surface-level reading without opportunities for analysis, interpretation, or reflection, as they lack discussion or follow-up tasks. Quotes from 12th-grade science students highlight feelings of uncertainty about comprehension, absence of deep thinking, and lack of critical activities, with observations confirming that the program remains basic, preventing higher-order thinking development and limiting cognitive growth in this isolated setting.

Interpretively, this theme underscores the program's failure to cultivate critical thinking and deeper understanding, leaving students in a rural madrasah context feeling intellectually stagnant. It aligns with Bloom's taxonomy (2019), which emphasizes higher-order skills like analysis and evaluation, and Vygotsky's social constructivism (2018), where interaction is essential for cognitive advancement. The findings connect to previous research, such as Sari (2019) on superficial literacy in rural Indonesian schools and Widodo et al. (2020) on limited cognitive engagement in Islamic education, but highlight Lombok's geographic isolation as exacerbating the lack of interactive elements, hindering students' ability to develop reflective and analytical skills.

Practically, these findings call for program enhancements like incorporating discussion groups, reflective journaling, and critical thinking prompts to build higher-order skills. Teachers can be trained in facilitating deeper engagement, and schools can integrate culturally relevant materials to encourage analysis. This contributes to cognitive development in rural Islamic schools, promoting student empowerment and addressing educational disparities in underserved areas like Lombok for more effective literacy outcomes.

Cognitive Impact (“Limited Higher-Order Skill Development”)

The theme "Cognitive Impact (“Limited Higher-Order Skill Development”)" illustrates how the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, fails to foster advanced cognitive skills among students. Interviews reveal that students engage in surface-level reading without opportunities for analysis, interpretation, or reflection, as they lack discussion or follow-up tasks. Quotes from 12th-grade science students highlight feelings of uncertainty about comprehension, absence of deep thinking, and lack of critical activities, with observations confirming that the program remains basic, preventing higher-order thinking development and limiting cognitive growth in this isolated setting.

Interpretively, this theme underscores the program's failure to cultivate critical thinking and deeper understanding, leaving students in a rural madrasah context feeling intellectually

stagnant. It aligns with Bloom's taxonomy (2019), which emphasizes higher-order skills like analysis and evaluation, and Vygotsky's social constructivism (2018), where interaction is essential for cognitive advancement. The findings connect to previous research, such as Sari (2019) on superficial literacy in rural Indonesian schools and Widodo et al. (2020) on limited cognitive engagement in Islamic education, but highlight Lombok's geographic isolation as exacerbating the lack of interactive elements, hindering students' ability to develop reflective and analytical skills.

Practically, these findings call for program enhancements like incorporating discussion groups, reflective journaling, and critical thinking prompts to build higher-order skills. Teachers can be trained in facilitating deeper engagement, and schools can integrate culturally relevant materials to encourage analysis. This contributes to cognitive development in rural Islamic schools, promoting student empowerment and addressing educational disparities in underserved areas like Lombok for more effective literacy outcomes.

Challenges and Barriers (“Resource Constraints and Short Reading Periods”)

The theme "Challenges and Barriers (“Resource Constraints and Short Reading Periods”)" reveals the practical obstacles hindering the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Interviews indicate that students rely on repetitive literacy sheets with limited variety, reducing engagement, while short reading periods force them to rush through materials without meaningful comprehension. Quotes from 12th-grade science students express frustration over monotonous resources and a desire for more diverse, personalized materials. Observations confirm that the brief duration and lack of alignment with student interests create barriers, diminishing motivation and participation in this isolated educational setting.

Interpretively, this theme illustrates how resource limitations and time constraints stifle student engagement and learning potential in a rural madrasah, fostering a sense of disconnection from literacy activities. It aligns with resource-based learning theories, such as those in Bandura's social cognitive theory (2018), where access to varied materials enhances motivation and self-efficacy, and Freire's critical pedagogy (2018), which critiques restrictive educational environments that limit student agency. The findings connect to previous research, including Sari (2019) on material scarcity in rural Indonesian schools and Widodo et al. (2020) on time-related barriers in Islamic education, but emphasize Lombok's geographic isolation as amplifying these issues, where repetitive resources and rushed routines prevent students from developing sustained interest and deeper literacy skills.

Practically, these findings suggest diversifying reading materials through community partnerships or digital libraries to address resource constraints, and extending program time to allow for thoughtful engagement. Schools can incorporate student input for material selection and train teachers to facilitate flexible sessions. This contributes to overcoming barriers in rural Islamic schools, boosting motivation and literacy outcomes, and promoting equity in underserved areas like Lombok by making programs more inclusive and effective.

Social and Emotional Influence (“Emotional Engagement and Equity Issues”)

The theme "Social and Emotional Influence (“Emotional Engagement and Equity Issues”)" delves into how the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, shapes students' emotional and social dynamics. Interviews indicate that the program's routine structure fosters feelings of disconnection and boredom, with students reporting a lack of emotional investment due to unengaging materials and

absence of interactive follow-ups. Quotes from 12th-grade science students express discomfort and reduced focus when content fails to resonate, leading to disengagement. Observations further reveal that knowledge gaps marginalize some students, making them appear less confident and unsupported, resulting in an inequitable classroom experience where emotional involvement varies widely, and not all students feel equally valued or capable in this remote setting.

Interpretively, this theme highlights the program's shortcomings in nurturing emotional bonds and social equity, causing students in a rural madrasah to experience alienation and unequal participation, which can long-term affect their sense of belonging and self-worth. It resonates with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (2019), where emotional security and social inclusion are foundational for learning engagement, and Bandura's social cognitive theory (2018), which underscores the role of supportive environments in building self-efficacy and motivation. Additionally, it aligns with equity frameworks in Freire's critical pedagogy (2018), critiquing systems that perpetuate disparities by failing to address individual needs. Connecting to prior research, Sari (2019) examines emotional detachment in rural Indonesian literacy initiatives, while Widodo et al. (2020) address equity gaps in Islamic education, yet this study uniquely emphasizes Lombok's isolation, where resource limitations intensify boredom and marginalization, undermining social cohesion and emotional growth in the classroom.

Practically, these insights advocate for transforming the program to prioritize emotional engagement through personalized, culturally relevant materials and inclusive discussions that address knowledge disparities. Schools can implement equity measures like small-group support and teacher training to recognize and mitigate emotional barriers, fostering a fairer atmosphere. Community involvement could introduce diverse resources to spark interest and reduce boredom. This contributes to comprehensive literacy education in rural Islamic schools, tackling emotional and equity issues in isolated areas like Lombok, and promoting environments where all students feel supported, motivated, and empowered to participate fully in their learning journey.

Recommendations for Improvement (“Desire for Interactive and Contextually Relevant Activities”)

The theme "Recommendations for Improvement (“Desire for Interactive and Contextually Relevant Activities”)" captures students' suggestions for enhancing the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, to make it more engaging and effective. Interviews reveal a strong preference for interactive elements like post-reading discussions, teacher explanations, and group sharing to deepen understanding and foster participation. Quotes from 12th-grade science students emphasize the need for materials tied to daily life, opportunities to ask questions, and collaborative activities to learn from peers. Observations confirm that the current program lacks these features, leaving students curious but unsupported, with no space for clarification or exchange, highlighting a desire for meaningful, student-centered changes in this isolated educational context.

Interpretively, this theme reflects students' yearning for a literacy program that transcends passive routines, promoting active involvement and relevance to build confidence and motivation in a rural madrasah setting. It aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivism (2018), which advocates for interactive learning through dialogue and collaboration to enhance cognitive growth, and Freire's critical pedagogy (2018), emphasizing learner-centered approaches that connect education to real-life contexts for empowerment. The findings also resonate with Bandura's social cognitive theory (2018), where interactive environments boost

self-efficacy and engagement. Relating to prior research, Sari (2019) discusses the need for interactive literacy in rural Indonesian schools, and Widodo et al. (2020) highlight student-driven improvements in Islamic education, yet this study uniquely underscores Lombok's geographic isolation, where contextually relevant activities could bridge knowledge gaps and reduce disengagement, fostering a more equitable and emotionally supportive learning experience.

Practically, these recommendations urge schools to integrate interactive features such as brief discussions, teacher-guided sessions, and group activities into the program, while sourcing materials that reflect students' interests and local culture. Training teachers to facilitate these changes and involving students in material selection can create a more inclusive environment. This contributes to transforming literacy education in rural Islamic schools, addressing student desires for relevance and interaction, and ultimately improving cognitive and emotional outcomes in underserved areas like Lombok by making programs more adaptive and student-focused.

Conclusion

This descriptive qualitative study explored the implementation of the morning literacy program at MA NW Kotaraja, a rural Islamic senior high school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, revealing both the program's routine nature and its potential for meaningful improvement. Through observations and interviews with 12th-grade science students, the findings highlighted key themes: the emphasis on formality over substance in routine vs. meaningful learning, variable interest and participation in engagement levels, limited development of higher-order cognitive skills, resource constraints and short reading periods as barriers, emotional disengagement and equity issues in social and emotional influences, and students' desires for interactive and contextually relevant activities. Overall, the program functions primarily as a daily ritual, with students engaging in silent reading without interactive elements, leading to surface-level participation, reduced motivation, and missed opportunities for deeper cognitive and emotional growth. These insights underscore the challenges of implementing literacy initiatives in resource-limited, geographically isolated settings, where the program's current structure fails to foster critical thinking, equity, or sustained engagement.

The study contributes to the literature on literacy education in rural Islamic schools by providing a nuanced, classroom-level perspective that complements broader national assessments. Unlike previous research focusing on quantitative outcomes or policy-level analyses, this work captures the lived experiences of students and teachers, emphasizing how geographic isolation in Lombok exacerbates issues like resource scarcity and lack of interactivity. By highlighting the gap between intended literacy development and actual practice, the findings offer a foundation for rethinking literacy programs to align with students' needs, promoting educational equity in underserved areas. Methodologically, the use of thematic analysis and triangulation ensured a trustworthy portrayal of the program's dynamics, fostering empathy and respect for participants' realities in a challenging environment.

Practically, the implications point to actionable strategies for enhancing the morning literacy program. Schools can incorporate interactive elements such as post-reading discussions, teacher-guided clarifications, and group activities to shift from routine to meaningful learning. Diversifying materials through community partnerships or digital resources, extending session times, and training teachers to address equity and emotional barriers could boost engagement and cognitive outcomes. These changes not only improve

literacy skills but also support social and emotional development, empowering students in rural madrasah to participate more actively in their education and society. Ultimately, this study advocates for adaptive, student-centered literacy programs that bridge local contexts with global educational goals, contributing to broader efforts to reduce literacy disparities in Indonesia.

While the findings provide valuable insights, future research could expand to include teacher perspectives, longitudinal studies on program impacts, or comparative analyses with other rural schools to further refine literacy interventions. By addressing these gaps, educators and policymakers can create more inclusive and effective literacy programs, ensuring that students in places like MA NW Kotaraja not only read but truly engage with the world around them. This work reaffirms the importance of listening to student voices in shaping education, fostering hope for a more literate and equitable future in Indonesia's diverse communities.

References

- Asian Development Bank. (2015). *Education in Indonesia: From crisis to recovery*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
- Bandura, A. (2018). *Social cognitive theory*. Worth Publishers.
- Bloom, B. S. (2019). *Bloom's taxonomy*. Pearson.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2020). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Maslow, A. H. (2019). *A theory of human motivation*. Martino Fine Books.
- Merriam, S. B. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Literacy Trust. (2014). *Children's and young people's reading in 2014: Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual survey*. London: National Literacy Trust.
- OECD. (2015). *Skills for social progress: The power of social and emotional skills*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Prasetyo, A., & Nugroho, R. (2022). The impact of morning literacy programs on student cognitive development in rural Islamic schools. *Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation*, 26(1), 45-62.

- Rukmini, D., & Sri, W. (2014). Literacy programs in rural Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 39, 45-56.
- Sari, N. P. (2019). Literacy programs in rural Indonesian schools: Routines without depth. *Journal of Southeast Asian Education*, 10(2), 45-62.
- Suryadarma, D., & Jones, G. W. (2020). Education in Indonesia: Trends and challenges. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 56(3), 345-368.
- Suyanto, B. (2013). The role of morning routines in enhancing student literacy in Islamic schools. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 12(2), 78-92.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Education for all 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report 2020: Inclusion and education—All means all*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2014). *Teaching and learning: Achieving quality for all*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
- UNICEF. (2013). *The state of the world's children 2013: Children with disabilities*. New York: UNICEF.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (2018). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Widodo, A., et al. (2020). Formal literacy practices in Islamic schools: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 102, 101-115.
- World Bank. (2014). *Indonesia: Avoiding the trap*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2021). *Indonesia: Enhancing teacher effectiveness and accountability for better learning*. Washington, DC: World Bank.