

Research Article

Exploring Parents' Attempt to Conduct Home Literacy Practices for Young Learners

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Abstract

In Indonesia, it is quite hard to find a study that raised the topic of home literacy even though the topic is very important to discuss. This research will provide an overview of how parents in Indonesia carry out home literacy practices with their children. Thus, this research aimed to explore the types of home literacy practices by Indonesian parents. The researcher collected the data through an interview via Zoom meeting as a method of this research. The data were transcribed and codified under the theory of Burgees, Hect, and Lonigan (2002). For analyzing the data, the researcher uses a thematic analysis. From the findings, it can be known that the mother played a big role in the sustainability of home literacy. While the father's role in supporting and teaching the Quran or reciting Surah. There are four roles in conducting home literacy as performed by the parents who had the same level of education and from the middle and upper economic background. These are the limiting environment, the literacy interface, the active home literacy environment, and the passive home literacy environment.

Keywords

Home literacy; parents; home literacy practices; children; parents' attempt

Introduction

Technically, literacy practices are defined as daily activities that are related to the use of texts in a particular time and space and consider the values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships (Parlindungan, 2017). Before children enter a formal school, children have got literacy practices from their parents at home. Moreover, the contribution of parents to literacy practices in early childhood has a positive impact on children's cognitive and socioemotional development (Barza & von Suchodoletz, 2016). Some previous studies have found that home literacy practices can impact children's language and literacy development (Guo et al, 2020; Stutzel 2019). In addition, both parents' involvement more frequently in home literacy practices can impact children's better reading, math, and social outcomes in preschool (Baker, 2013). Thus, parents become an important influencer in home literacy practices to enable their children to have the good cognitive ability and socioemotional. Furthermore, they can also make their children love to read.



Topics about home literacy in Indonesia are rarely discussed. Thus far, there were two research that discussed home literacy. Nuswantara, et. al. (2022) found that activities of home literacy were Phonic Awareness and Decoding Skills. The activities were done by parents with preschoolers. The second research was by Juliah, et. al (2021). They found that home literacy activities included shared reading with the mother, going to the cinema together with the mother, share experiences after school with parents. Therefore, the discussion about home literacy in Indonesia is about the activities that can be done by parents. For the last research that has been conducted regarding this topic for the past two years, it is proven that it was still limited to find research about home literacy. Some surveys have shown that Indonesians are located in the bottom rank in the literacy field. For example, based on a PISA survey in 2018, Indonesia decreased in reading performance after 3 years after the last survey (OECD Report, 2018). Seeing the results of the survey somewhat proved that the literacy rate in Indonesia tends to be less conducted. This concern will have an impact on children; there will be no home literacy for them and there is a possibility that their language skills will not evolve. Surprisingly, the education level of parents has an impact on children's reading ability and PISA test in Zonguldak (a province in Turkey) because parents with higher education levels will provide educational facilities at home (İnce & Gözütok,2018). The study indicates that students' performance in literacy practices is like a cycle of life. High literacy can be begun and built when they are children, at home with their parents.

However, considering that the Indonesian literacy level tends to increase but is still below ranking 100 (OECD Report, 2018), therefore this topic is quite important to raise in order to educate prospective parents to try to carry out home literacy practices when having their children later. Since current studies tend to elaborate literacy practices in schools or classrooms, those fewer studies uncover how families contribute to developing literacy practices at home. For example, in the research that conducted by Curry, et. al (2016). They discussed how family and school influence children's home literacy practices. They interview the mother and also ask them to record reading activities together at home. According to Curry et. al (2016), there are things that teachers cannot do but can be done by mothers at home. The conversation that happens during shared reading, mothers modeled and engaged in. Thus, to fill the void, this research will provide an overview of how parents in Indonesia carry out home literacy practices with their children.

Method

Research Design

This study uses qualitative research and a case study is the design of this research. In addition, this research uses thematic analysis to explore how parents conduct the second language literacy practice at home. The researcher chooses this design because this design can help identify and explain in detail their literacy practices at home. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the meaning of this thematic analysis pattern allows researchers to identify something important and needed relating to the topic or research being explored. To identify and explain activity literacy practices at home, thematic analysis can be used to analyze data obtained through interview transcripts.

Research Subject

The setting of this research involved parents that conduct literacy practices at home toward their children in the age range of kindergarten. The researcher will interview the mother who works as a lecturer in English Education at an Islamic university while the father works as a private employee in the field of livestock maintenance and trading.

The participants are a couple. The female parent is Lily and the male parent is Stefan. Lily has been a lecturer in English Education at an Islamic University since 2012. Her background is a master's degree in literature. She is also interested in research, especially children's literature. She was chosen to be a



participant in this research because she introduced literacy practice to her children by reading books before going to bed, or whenever she wanted to read. She also provides and facilitates books that can help her to carry out literacy practice activities at home. Along with her, there is her husband, another participant who is a private employee in the field of livestock maintenance and trading, and a father too called Stefan. He was chosen to be a participant in this research because he is cooperating with his wife to conduct a good home literacy environment for their children. The children were Sadam (6y.o) and Sherina (5y.o). They both loved to read books and watch movies that were related to friendly characters, such as Tayo the little bus, Pororo the penguin, and Titipo the friendly train. Different genders did not make them have different preferences. As a sister, Sherina tends to agree with what her brother agrees upon. At their age, they need to have a role model for socializing with their environments. Thus, discussing the characters that they loved was considered to be a fun preparation to deal with real-world social issues. The participants in this research both have the same level of education, that is post-secondary education and they are from middle and upper-economic backgrounds.

Data Collection

The researcher uses a semi-structured interview. The data collection was obtained through recorded interviews with the researcher. A transcript of the study interview will also be attached to the appendix. For this study, 9 questions are ready to be asked of the interviewees. Those questions are constructed based on (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002) which state that HLE can be characterized by the variety of resources and opportunities provided to children and accompanied by the skills, abilities, dispositions, and resources of parents that determine the provision of these opportunities for children. This instrument is based on theory and has been confirmed by the supervisor of this study. The researcher used in-depth interviews to gain a better understanding and more information about the data. The data was recorded through a Zoom Meeting and was recorded by the researcher.

Data Analysis

In doing this research, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyze and report the data. The researcher chose thematic analysis because of its accessibility and flexibility. Other than that, thematic analysis is only a method of data analysis. Thus, the flexibility and accessibility can be confirmed. In used thematic analysis, there are 6 steps that the researcher must do. First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by way of listening or watching the recording, reading, and rereading the data. Then, the researcher invented the general codes that help to identify and label data that have potential relevance to the research question. After the general codes have been invented, the researcher sought the theme that helped to detect something important in the data that has relation to the research question. Next, the researcher reviewed the possible theme. Subsequently, the researcher named and defined the theme. Last, the researcher produced the report.

Results

Through the interview, it can be concluded that the mother is mostly doing literacy at home. Meanwhile, the father gets the role of inviting the children to play, teaching the Quran, and listening when the mother discusses with the children.

There are 4 types of home literacy, namely the limiting environment, the literacy interface, the passive home literacy environment, and the active home literacy environment. These four types are carried out by participants for their children at home. The first type is the limiting environment. It is that the resources in question are the intelligence of parents, language, and abilities, as well as how parents' attitudes towards education. In this data, this type was found when mothers consider literacy or being literate not only to understand the letters but also when children can discover new things from books that do not always have to be formal knowledge but can be as simple as the joy felt by children. In



addition to giving books, mothers also provide children's films that can provide moral messages for children. According to her mother, literacy is as important as education. In this case, the father's answer was the same as the mother. The father was also aware of the importance of education and literacy for children.

Then the second type is the literacy interface. This concept explains the participation of parents in a number of activities that expose children to literacy activities directly or indirectly, such as reading together as well as parents' views on the importance of literacy. In this data this type was found when the child takes the initiative to do literacy by asking his mother to read a story. According to the father, because his mother had been accustomed to literacy from a young age, the child became interested in literacy and actively asked questions.

The third type is the passive home literacy environment. This concept explains the indirect learning of children who see parental activities such as reading newspapers or watching TV whose programs are intended to entertain only. According to the mother, she rarely reads physical books, more often e-books on her gadget. The child will be curious and ask what the mother is doing. If they see letters and white fulfilling the gadget his mother is holding, the child will immediately understand that his mother is reading. Sometimes, the child asks the mother to sit on her lap and read along. The same thing applies when mothers read physical books, especially when the cover is colorful and interesting for children, the children will actually ask for the book their mother is reading.

Last but not least, the last type is an active home literacy environment. This concept describes the efforts of parents to involve their children directly in activities that encourage the development of children's literacy/language, such as playing rhythmic games or reading together. According to the mother, what she emphasizes to her children is identifying something in the book or discussing it with her child rather than just reading the letters. In addition to providing books, mothers also provide films through Netflix and even have a hard disk containing films that the children can watch when they are at their grandmother's house. In addition to reading together, the mother also often storytelling according to what is on her mind. As for the father, the effort he makes is to be a listener when the child discusses with the mother, teaches the Quran at home, or provides an understanding of a film they have watched together with the children.

Discussion

In this research, the theory used is the theory of Burgees, Hect, Lonigan (2002) which explains that HLE can be categorized by the variety of resources and opportunities provided to children and accompanied by the skills, abilities, dispositions, and resources of parents that determine the provision of these opportunities for children. They conceptualized HLE into four concepts as described below.

Home Literacy by The Mother

Mothers act of limiting environment

According to Burgees, Hect, Lonigan (2002), limiting environment is the concept that puts forward the ability and the nature of parents in providing literacy opportunities which are determined by the resources of the parents. It means that parents should have the good resources to provide a home literacy environment for their children. In this study the mother performs the act of limiting the environment by buying books for the children as a means of investment. She also did a review for some selected movies, and then she watched the movies with the children while discussing the story and the characters. The following are examples of interview answers that lead to the concept of the limiting environment.



“What's more, if I don't just get a cool job or get a degree, it's more of a mindset that's formed to become more dignified, become more civilized, and become more 'human'. So, it's not just mammals that walk on two legs but we think, can criticize, can provide problem solving for others, can be useful, education is like that.”

“The biggest investment we can give to our children is not money but education.”

“However, he really likes to read. So, what I'm trying at home is literacy or being literate, it's not just understanding the letters but he likes to discover new things from books. The new things don't have to be formal science, but things as simple as joy.”

From the statement above, it can be inferred that the mother has deep thoughts about education. She says that education is not only just to get a cool job or just get a degree but education makes us useful as human beings. Other than that, she thinks that education is the biggest investment that she and his husband can give for their children.

In a literature review developed by Stutzel (2019), she writes that honoring children's literacy skills early before children enter kindergarten and ensuring children do not miss out requires a big role for parents here. One way so that children do not miss out is to engage the parent role in every single step of children's development. According to the participant statement, literacy is a big investment. It could be linked with Stutzel's (2019) research mentioning that in order to avoid children being missing out the role of parents were necessary during their development. For example, through home literacy activities. For success in reading literacy at school. The impact of parents who play a role in literacy for children is also a lot, not only cognitive. This also has an impact on the closeness of parents and children. The benefits are many so if it is not carried out the impact will be opposite to the advantages discussed previously.

According to the mother, her role in the home literacy environment is important. The same thing is also discussed in the research discussed in Alshatti, Al-Sulaih, and Abdalla (2019). The results of the study are mostly mothers with low education significantly lacking in carrying out the 4 steps of the home literacy (reading stories, telling stories, teaching alphabet and teaching songs) compared to mothers with post-secondary education. Since the participant in this research had post-secondary education, four steps of home literacy were done by the parents. This research emphasizes how important the education level of the mother is for home literacy. The previous research and this study are to prove that if a mother has higher education, there is a tendency that she will be aware of literacy and will provide their children with educational tools that will help their children to develop their abilities because the mother realizes how important the education is.

Mothers act of providing literacy interface

The literacy interface is the concept that explains the participation of parents in a number of activities that expose children to literacy activities directly or indirectly, such as reading together as well as parents' views on the importance of literacy. The following are examples of interview answers that lead to the concept of the literacy interface.

“Now he's enjoy reading The Lion King and memorizing the plot and also memorizing the names of the characters and the family relationships in the characters. He can't read at all, so I'll tell him the story.”

“They usually ask.”

“There is that book, which I think needs to be accompanied because the story and pictures are a bit complex.”

From the encryption above, the mother tends to tell her children the story when the child asks her and accompanied the child when the story and the pictures are a bit complex so the mother can explain what it means. What the mother does in this part is in line with one of those explained by Ponzetti and



Bodine (1993) explaining that family literacy has 3 components. The first component is adult basic education which includes instructions in numeracy, reading, writing, job training, or English as a second language. The second component is early childhood/elementary education which is usually an educational effort focused on children under 8 years of age. The third component is parent education where this component has 3 different elements, formal parent education, parent support services, and parent involvement. What the mother does in this part is included in the second component where the mother conducts early childhood education that focuses on children under 8 years of age. In this case, what the mother did was in line with previous research.

Mothers play a role in the passive home literacy environment

The passive home literacy environment is the concept that explains the indirect learning of children who see parental activities such as reading newspapers or watching TV whose programs are intended to entertain only. The following are examples of interview answers that lead to the concept of passive home literacy.

“So, I really like reading, but lately I rarely buy books because I like to read through e-books like that on the Ipad. Well, they like to think that I'm playing a gadget. If not via HP.”

“So even if there is an experience of seeing parents reading, it must be from me, not from my husband. So, that's how often, almost every day, but unfortunately, he does not always see me reading physical books like that. And it is misunderstood sometimes as playing my gadget. It's just that if you already know this, you know it looks white with just the writing, oh they believe it.”

“Sometimes when I read, 'What are you doing?' My child keeps asking my lap to see what I'm reading. Sometimes 'I read too ya' and then they keep reading. Sometimes they don't care too. However, almost every day, they will see that I read books. but for physical books they rarely see me reading it. Because it's quite rare, so if they see me holding a physical book, they are usually asked "I want too". Especially if the book cover has a tendency to be misled in interpretation due to sensitive issues”

Through the encryption above, it is known that the child often sees the mother reading even though the mother didn't read a 'real' book and sometimes the child sits on her lap and also reads what her mother reads. Indirectly, the mother is instilling the habit of reading in her child by giving an example of herself reading a book. So that the child will be curious and 'join' in reading or at least the child will feel motivated to follow what his mother is doing. Without realizing it, the mother is preparing her child to face challenges in the future as discussed in the article by Widya and Rintaningrum (2020). According to them, it is possible that in the future the era the child and the other will face will be more advanced and it is feared that the impact will be wider on various groups and various fields. Because of that, we can build a literacy culture for future generations by reading fiction or non-fiction books where we can get the knowledge that can help us through this problem. How do we build a literacy culture for future generations? One of them is to cultivate the habit of reading from an early age. Of course this is done in stages. What mothers do in this part is one of the stages to fostering a literacy culture in their children.

Mothers performs active home literacy environment

Active HLE concept describes the efforts of parents to involve their children directly in activities that encourage the development of children's literacy/language, such as playing rhythmic games or reading together. The following are examples of interview answers that lead to the concept of the active home literacy environment.

“I think while continuing to be taught for a long time they can also read the letters, yes. But for him to continue to identify and discuss things like that, that's what I emphasize when I'm at home now.”



“So, I already have the hard disk, you know, or Netflix. Their grandmother's house doesn't have a Smart TV, I've put it on my hard disk. Well, for example, what is her grandmother want to do activities, 'sambah, I want to watch Toy Story', so just have to set it like that. So almost every day watching movies. The films that I have chosen.”

According to the encryption above, the mother is not only reading for her child. She also taught her child to identify and discuss together. Likewise, she gives a movie to her child. This is almost the same as done by Guo et al. (2020) in the results of their one-year longitudinal study. However, the difference is that Guo conducted this research to examine the relationship between reading and writing practices at home and children's writing development. Meanwhile, the mother expands the definition of home literacy that she does. Both of them have a similarity, that is not limiting literacy activities. Guo with reading and writing, while the mother with discussing, identify, until watching a movie. Along with the development of technology and the times, the definition of literacy is getting wider and varied. One of them is the mother's opinion who thinks that watching films that can educate children is already part of literacy for children.

Mothers' significant view on literacy

According to the mothers, being literate is not only understanding the letter. But her child likes to find a new thing as simple as joy. Sometimes, she gives a book that doesn't have a letter. However, the contrasting colors that children see, and cute pictures can make children feel joy. And the child knows he gets the joys and the entertain from the book. Apart from books, movies are a tool to provide literacy according to the mother. From the movie Toy Story 4, the child was inspired to make a similar toy made by Bonnie, the main character in the film, and her toy named Forky. Her mother felt that watching movies like this was more beneficial than watching YouTube which he would only skip. Still discussing the film, the mother and the child do a discussion together because sometimes the child will ask questions like who's the villain or who's the protagonist. When the mother explains the answer, the child will listen carefully even though he doesn't understand. The mother 100% believes that this is a part of literacy. That understanding a human characterization through the figure in literary works is part of literacy.

Home Literacy by The Father

In this research, the theory used is the theory of Burgees, Hect, Lonigan (2002) which explains that HLE can be categorized by the variety of resources and opportunities provided to children and accompanied by the skills, abilities, dispositions, and resources of parents that determine the provision of these opportunities for children. They conceptualized HLE into four concepts as described below.

Fathers act the limiting environment

The limiting environment is the concept puts forward the ability and the nature of parents in providing literacy opportunities which are determined by the resources of the parents. The resources in question are the intelligence of parents, language, and abilities, as well as how parents' attitudes towards education. The following are examples of interview answers that lead to the concept of the limiting environment.

“In the current position, parents have begun to understand and begin to understand the importance of education, so the current condition is that some parents want the best education for their children. In the past, what was important was that the children could eat, and the family could eat. But right now, education is the main thing, so parents want to find out what kind of education is a better place to study.”

“More literacy efforts go to his mother.” “When teaching children to read, storytelling is mostly to their mother.”(003&004)



“Because it gives knowledge or experience to children is also important. Because that knowledge is passed from parents to their children. Apart from being able to go to school, it was taught by their parents at first. Yes, it is better to be introduced from an early age.”

From the encryption above, it can be seen clearly that fathers (and mothers) have the same level of education and awareness of doing home literacy. This was conveyed by research belonging to Erik et al. (2020) which explains that parents who have a high level of education have an awareness of doing home literacy for their children. Moreover, in this research, the mother has a hobby and received a master's degree in the children's literature field. Thus, a combination of post-secondary educated parents will create engaging teamwork in carrying home literacy. The parents' interests might not be the same, yet supporting the literacy process itself is the utmost.

Fathers providing the literacy interface

The literacy interface is the concept that explains the participation of parents in a number of activities that expose children to literacy activities directly or indirectly, such as reading together as well as parents' views on the importance of literacy. The following are examples of interview answers that lead to the concept of the literacy interface.

“Because they have been taught by their mother since childhood, they are also interested. Asking questions, like that. Yes, that's why the importance of it has been taught since childhood, right, so I started asking questions even though they are still 5 years old.”

From the encryption above, it can be seen that the father also explains if the child asks questions and realizes the importance of teaching literacy from an early age. The impact of the collaboration of fathers and mothers who are literate in literacy will be felt when children begin to enter the school phase as discussed in the literature review discussed by Stutzel (2019). When parents involve themselves in family literacy activities with their children, they have prepared their children for success in reading and literacy skills at school. In this case, the father does not have any knowledge about literacy and he does not study literacy at all. However, the difference in the field of work between mother and father will be very beneficial for children according to Stutzel (2019).

Fathers perform active home literacy environment

Active HLE describes the efforts of parents to involve their children directly in activities that encourage the development of children's literacy/language, such as playing rhythmic games or reading together. The following are examples of interview answers that lead to the concept of the active home literacy environment.

“Then earlier, it was also limited to me - if it's just with me, it's just reading the Koran. Just a little bit, like that. At least it's just memorization, like that.”

“Heard a lot. If his mother reads something like that, I just listen more and watch them interact.”

“Watching movies, whether at home or at the cinema, is often invited to watch. Yes, given an understanding or 'yes the story is like this' like that. Yes, it will be told, if not tomorrow they will ask. The point is, that the discussion is about what the story is, although sometimes I just enjoy the visuals.”

In the discussion of the mother's answer, four concepts of home literacy were carried out by the mother. Meanwhile, from the father's answer, there are only three because the father does not like to read so the child never sees his father reading a book. According to the father, it can be concluded that his role is to support the mother and teach the child the religious aspects, such as reading the Quran



and reciting Surah. The father also listens to the discussion between the mother and the child and gives an understanding of things that the child does not understand.

In terms of Literacy Practices at Home, the researcher also discussed a study from Lynch (2019) that carried out an interview with some fathers to explore their perspectives on fathers' involvement with their children and especially focused on the father's description of general practices at home. According to research that Lynch conducts, she found some research which, although limited, shows that fathers have a special role in children's literacy and language. From the results of the researcher's interview with fathers, it seems that fathers who are participants in this research have hobbies or skills outside of their work. The father said that they discussed their hobbies with the children because they both had the same hobbies and interests. From that study and this current study, there is a similarity where the father and the child have the same interest in watching a movie together (together with mom too). In Lynch research, she explains benefits that the child will get when the father involves in home literacy process. For example, the interaction that the child does with the father can help shape the child's knowledge through the interests and hobbies that the father likes. Father's motivation also influences children's motivation and involvement as well as a two-way relationship between children and father's persistent involvement in joint activities. Fathers also report that they share specific vocabulary and explain processes that involve father and son, such as learning to skate or explaining the role of a songwriter in creating a hit song. However, in this current study, the benefits that children get in the previous explanation do not seem to be visible and if you want to see the results, another study must be carried out when the children grow up.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, the types of home literacy from parents that depend on parents' post-secondary education, parents' financial background (middle and upper background) will create a positive limiting environment, an engaging literacy interface, a positive passive home literacy environment, and an active home literacy environment. Although this research concerns home literacy by parents, however in this study the mother plays a significant role on home literacy to the children. The mother applies four types of home literacy, while the father applies only three of them. In this case, the father was absent in performing the passive home literacy environment. It means that the mother has a role model in literacy at home.

The limitation of this research is it was conducted by examining only one couple and the context was Indonesia only. For further studies, researchers can explore broader contexts other than Indonesia. More participants with various backgrounds can be added. Besides, researching parents' role in developing their children's literacy during lockdown because of Covid-19 pandemic is also suggested to be further studies. Implying home literacy, especially in Indonesia, requires the role of parents with a strong educational background to be able to provide opportunities, resources, and understanding of literacy to children. It is necessary for parents to support and work together so that home literacy activities run well. Meanwhile, for teachers who plan to develop literacy at home and school at the same time, they could incorporate it with their parents so the home literacy environment can work well and can become a child's habit.

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Author Contribution and Competing Interest

Shafa Nurafifah as the researcher of this research contributes in making the draft of this research, looking for previous research for reference, making interview questions, interviewing, analyzing the data, and stating the conclusion. This research has no competing interest.

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