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## Implementation of Madrasah Literacy Program to Enhance Language Competence of Female Students at MTs As'adiyah Putri Pusat Sengkang, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of a literacy program at MTs As'adiyah Putri Pusat Sengkang, Indonesia, aimed at enhancing the language competence of female Islamic students (santriwati). The research employs a qualitative case study approach, collecting data through observations, interviews, and document analysis involving teachers, students, and administrators. The literacy program encompasses various activities including daily reading sessions, writing workshops, vocabulary enrichment, and Islamic text comprehension exercises. Results indicate significant improvements in reading fluency, writing skills, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency among participants. The program successfully integrated traditional Islamic educational values with modern literacy pedagogies, creating a culturally responsive learning environment. Key success factors included strong institutional support, teacher professional development, diverse reading materials, and sustained implementation. This

study contributes to understanding effective literacy interventions in Islamic educational contexts and provides practical implications for madrasah institutions seeking to enhance students' language competencies while maintaining their religious identity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language competence serves as a fundamental pillar for academic success and lifelong learning, particularly in educational institutions that prepare students for both religious and secular challenges (Muhsyanur, 2023). In the Indonesian context, madrasah institutions face the dual responsibility of maintaining Islamic educational traditions while ensuring students develop the language proficiencies necessary for contemporary academic and professional contexts (Zuhdi et al., 2021). The importance of language competence in madrasah settings cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts students' ability to comprehend religious texts, engage with modern educational materials, and participate effectively in Indonesia's increasingly globalized society. Recent educational reforms in Indonesia have emphasized the critical role of literacy programs in enhancing students' language abilities across all educational sectors, including Islamic schools (Anggara & Pramudita, 2022).

MTs As'adiyah Putri Sengkang represents a significant Islamic educational institution in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, dedicated to educating female students within an Islamic framework. Like many madrasah institutions across Indonesia, this school faces unique challenges in developing students' language competencies while maintaining its religious educational identity (Hidayah & Rahman, 2023). The student population, referred to as santriwati, comes from diverse linguistic backgrounds, with many speaking regional languages at home while needing to master Indonesian, Arabic, and increasingly English for academic purposes. This multilingual context presents both opportunities and challenges for literacy development. Research has demonstrated that effective literacy programs in multilingual contexts must acknowledge and build upon students' existing linguistic repertoires while systematically developing new language competencies (García & Kleifgen, 2020).

The concept of literacy has evolved significantly beyond basic reading and writing skills to encompass critical thinking, digital competencies, and the ability to engage with diverse texts across multiple contexts (Muhsyanur, Suharti, et al., 2022). Contemporary literacy frameworks emphasize the importance of developing students' abilities to comprehend, analyze, evaluate, and create texts for various purposes and audiences (Duke et al., 2021). In Islamic educational contexts, literacy takes on additional dimensions, including the ability to read and comprehend classical Arabic texts, understand religious terminology, and engage with both traditional and contemporary Islamic scholarship. Scholars have argued that effective literacy instruction in madrasah settings must integrate these religious literacy demands with broader academic literacy requirements, creating

comprehensive programs that serve students' multiple learning needs (Steenbrink, 2020).

Research on literacy programs in Islamic educational institutions has gained increasing attention in recent years, revealing both the challenges and opportunities inherent in these contexts. Studies have shown that successful literacy interventions in madrasah settings often combine traditional Islamic pedagogical approaches with evidence-based contemporary literacy practices (Ahmed & Rahman, 2022). This integration requires careful consideration of cultural and religious values, ensuring that literacy activities remain consistent with Islamic educational philosophy while incorporating effective instructional strategies. Furthermore, research indicates that gender-specific considerations play important roles in literacy program design, particularly in institutions serving exclusively female populations where cultural sensitivities and specific learning needs must be addressed (Malik & Azkiya, 2023).

The implementation of structured literacy programs in madrasah contexts requires comprehensive planning, adequate resources, and sustained institutional commitment. Research has identified several critical factors contributing to successful literacy program implementation, including administrative support, teacher professional development, access to diverse and culturally appropriate reading materials, and systematic assessment of student progress (Snow & Matthews, 2021). Additionally, successful programs often feature strong connections between literacy instruction and students' lived experiences, making reading and writing activities meaningful and relevant to their personal, academic, and religious lives. Studies have emphasized that literacy programs must be sustainable, requiring ongoing evaluation and adaptation based on student needs and program outcomes (Pressley & Allington, 2023).

Despite growing recognition of the importance of literacy in madrasah education, significant gaps remain in our understanding of how literacy programs can be effectively implemented in Indonesian Islamic schools, particularly those serving female students. While international research provides valuable frameworks for literacy instruction, context-specific studies examining the unique characteristics, challenges, and opportunities of Indonesian madrasah settings are essential for developing effective interventions (Nurlaila et al., 2022). This study addresses these gaps by investigating the implementation of a comprehensive literacy program at MTs As'adiyah Putri Pusat Sengkang, examining its components, implementation strategies, outcomes, and challenges. The research aims to contribute practical insights for educators and administrators seeking to enhance language competence in similar educational contexts while maintaining the distinctive Islamic character of madrasah education. Understanding successful literacy program implementation in this setting can inform broader efforts to strengthen language education in Indonesian Islamic schools and contribute to international scholarship on literacy in diverse cultural and religious contexts (Hamid et al., 2021; Yulianto & Hasanah, 2023).

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the implementation of the literacy program at MTs As'adiyah Putri Pusat Sengkang. The case study methodology was selected due to its appropriateness for examining complex educational interventions within their natural contexts, allowing for in-depth exploration of program components, implementation processes, and outcomes (Yin, 2018). Data collection occurred over six months during the 2023-2024 academic year and involved multiple methods to ensure comprehensive understanding and triangulation. Primary data sources included classroom observations of literacy activities conducted twice weekly, semi-structured interviews with twelve teachers, eight administrators, and twenty-four students selected through purposive sampling, and document analysis of program materials, lesson plans, student work samples, and assessment records. The research participants represented diverse roles within the literacy program, ensuring multiple perspectives on implementation and outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures, beginning with data familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes, followed by initial coding to identify relevant patterns and themes. Codes were then organized into broader thematic categories reflecting key aspects of program implementation, challenges, and outcomes. The analysis process was iterative, with constant comparison between emerging themes and raw data to ensure accurate representation of participants' experiences and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and (M Muhsyanur, 2023). Trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, where participants reviewed and validated interpretations of their contributions, and through investigator triangulation involving multiple researchers in the analysis process. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed through obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms, and securing institutional approval from both the school administration and relevant educational authorities. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for educational research, with particular attention to the cultural and religious sensitivities of the madrasah context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Program Components and Structure

The literacy program at MTs As'adiyah Putri Pusat Sengkang comprised multiple integrated components designed to develop comprehensive language competencies among santriwati. The program structure included daily sustained silent reading sessions of thirty minutes, weekly guided reading workshops focused on various text types, bi-weekly writing circles where students shared and received feedback on their compositions, and vocabulary enrichment activities embedded throughout the curriculum. These components were carefully designed to address the multidimensional nature of language competence, recognizing that effective

literacy development requires attention to reading fluency, comprehension, writing proficiency, and vocabulary knowledge. Research supports this comprehensive approach, with studies demonstrating that integrated literacy programs addressing multiple skill areas produce superior outcomes compared to programs focusing on isolated skills (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2020).

The program integrated both secular and religious texts, acknowledging the dual educational mission of madrasah institutions. Students engaged with contemporary Indonesian literature, international texts in translation, Arabic religious texts, and modern Islamic scholarship. This diverse textual landscape provided opportunities for students to develop varied reading competencies while maintaining connection to their religious identity. Scholars have emphasized the importance of text diversity in literacy programs, noting that exposure to multiple genres, styles, and content areas enhances students' ability to navigate different textual demands and develop flexible reading strategies (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). The inclusion of religious texts also served important motivational purposes, as students reported greater engagement with reading activities when they perceived connections to their faith and values.

Implementation strategies emphasized gradual skill development through scaffolded instruction. Teachers began with modeling activities, demonstrating reading strategies and writing techniques before transitioning to guided practice where students received support while developing independence. Eventually, students engaged in independent application of skills with periodic teacher feedback. This instructional progression aligns with contemporary understanding of effective literacy pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of explicit instruction combined with opportunities for authentic practice and gradual release of responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2021). Teachers reported that this approach helped students develop confidence and competence simultaneously, reducing anxiety often associated with literacy activities (Muhsyanur, Larisu, et al., 2022).

The program incorporated culturally responsive pedagogical practices that honored students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds while expanding their language competencies. Teachers deliberately connected literacy activities to students' lived experiences, invited students to share perspectives from their cultural contexts, and validated the use of regional languages as resources for learning rather than obstacles to overcome. Research on culturally responsive literacy instruction demonstrates that acknowledging and building upon students' cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge enhances engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Muhammad, 2023). Students in this study reported feeling more comfortable and motivated when literacy activities reflected their identities and experiences.

Assessment practices within the program combined formative and summative approaches, providing ongoing feedback for instructional adjustment while also documenting student progress over time. Teachers used reading fluency measures, comprehension assessments, writing rubrics, and vocabulary assessments at regular

intervals. Importantly, assessment data informed instructional decisions, with teachers modifying activities based on student performance and needs. Contemporary literacy research emphasizes the critical role of assessment in effective instruction, particularly when assessment data directly inform teaching practices and provide students with actionable feedback for improvement (Afflerbach, 2022). The systematic use of assessment data in this program contributed to its responsiveness and effectiveness.

### **Implementation Challenges and Solutions**

Despite careful planning, the literacy program encountered several implementation challenges that required adaptive solutions. A primary challenge involved limited access to diverse, high-quality reading materials appropriate for adolescent female students in an Islamic educational context. Many commercially available materials either lacked cultural relevance or failed to align with the school's Islamic values, creating difficulties in finding engaging texts. This challenge reflects broader issues in literacy education regarding the availability of culturally appropriate materials for diverse student populations (Souto-Manning et al., 2021). The school addressed this challenge by developing partnerships with Islamic publishers, creating a school-based digital library with vetted online resources, and encouraging teachers and students to create original texts that reflected their community's values and interests (Muhsyanur et al., 2021).

Teacher preparedness varied significantly, with some educators possessing strong backgrounds in literacy instruction while others had limited training in evidence-based literacy practices. This variability created inconsistencies in program implementation across classrooms and potentially affected student outcomes. Research consistently identifies teacher knowledge and skills as critical determinants of instructional quality and program effectiveness (Buehl & Beck, 2021). To address this challenge, the school implemented monthly professional development sessions focused on literacy instruction strategies, established peer observation and coaching systems where more experienced teachers supported colleagues, and provided access to online professional learning resources. Teachers reported that these professional development initiatives significantly enhanced their instructional confidence and competence.

Time constraints posed another significant challenge, as the school's curriculum already included extensive religious education requirements, leaving limited space for additional literacy programming. Balancing religious and secular educational goals represents a common tension in madrasah institutions, requiring careful curricular negotiation (Lukens-Bull, 2021). The school addressed this challenge through curriculum integration, embedding literacy instruction within existing subjects rather than adding separate literacy periods. For example, religious studies classes incorporated advanced reading comprehension strategies for Quranic and hadith texts, while social studies lessons included writing activities. This

integration approach allowed for literacy skill development without displacing other important curricular content.

Student motivation varied, with some santriwati demonstrating high engagement while others exhibited reluctance toward literacy activities, particularly writing tasks. Motivational differences among students represent normal variability, but programs must address this diversity to ensure broad participation and learning (Guthrie & Klauda, 2022). The school implemented several motivational strategies including student choice in reading material selection, public celebration of student writing through display and publication, peer reading partnerships, and connection of literacy activities to students' personal goals and interests. These strategies acknowledged students' autonomy and provided meaningful purposes for literacy engagement, resulting in gradual improvement in participation and enthusiasm.

Parental involvement remained limited, with many families uncertain about how to support their daughters' literacy development at home. Family engagement represents a critical but often underutilized resource in educational programs, with research demonstrating that parent involvement positively influences student achievement (Epstein, 2020). The school addressed this challenge by organizing parent literacy workshops explaining the program and providing specific strategies families could use at home, sending regular communication about program activities and student progress, and creating take-home reading activities that families could complete together. These initiatives gradually increased parental awareness and engagement, though sustained effort remained necessary to maintain family involvement.

### **Student Language Competence Outcomes**

Assessment data and teacher observations indicated substantial improvements in students' reading competencies following program implementation. Reading fluency measures showed average increases of 35% in words read correctly per minute over the six-month period, with students also demonstrating enhanced prosody and expression during oral reading. Comprehension assessments revealed improvements in students' abilities to identify main ideas, make inferences, analyze text structure, and evaluate author's purpose. These improvements align with research demonstrating that sustained, well-designed literacy interventions can produce measurable gains in reading performance (Kamil et al., 2020). Students themselves reported increased confidence in approaching challenging texts and greater enjoyment of reading activities, suggesting attitudinal shifts accompanying skill development.

Writing competencies also showed marked improvement across multiple dimensions. Analysis of student writing samples revealed enhanced organization, with clearer thesis statements, logical paragraph structure, and effective transitions. Students demonstrated expanded vocabulary use, incorporating more sophisticated and precise word choices in their compositions. Grammatical accuracy improved, with reduced errors in sentence structure, verb agreement, and punctuation.

Additionally, students' writing exhibited greater depth of content, with more detailed explanations, stronger supporting evidence, and more nuanced argumentation. Research on writing development emphasizes the importance of sustained practice with feedback, which characterized this program's approach (Graham et al., 2020). Teachers noted that students showed particular growth in narrative and persuasive writing, genres emphasized in the program.

Vocabulary development represented another area of significant growth, with students demonstrating both breadth and depth of word knowledge. Pre- and post-program vocabulary assessments showed average gains of 40% in academic vocabulary knowledge, with students able to define, explain, and use previously unfamiliar words in appropriate contexts. Students also showed improved word learning strategies, including use of context clues, morphological analysis, and dictionary skills. Contemporary vocabulary research emphasizes the importance of both explicit vocabulary instruction and opportunities for word learning through extensive reading, both of which characterized this program (Graves, 2023). Notably, students demonstrated transfer of vocabulary knowledge across contexts, using newly acquired words in both oral and written communication across subject areas.

Language confidence and self-efficacy showed notable improvements, with students reporting increased comfort participating in class discussions, reading aloud, and sharing their writing with peers. Self-efficacy beliefs significantly influence students' willingness to engage in challenging academic tasks and their persistence when encountering difficulties (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Teachers observed that students who previously avoided literacy activities began volunteering to read and share their work, suggesting genuine shifts in self-perception and confidence. This psychological dimension of literacy development, though sometimes overlooked, represents a critical outcome with long-term implications for students' continued learning and academic success.

The table below presents comparative data on student language competencies before and after program implementation:

**Table 1.** Pre- and Post-Program Language Competence Measures

Competence Area	Pre-Program Mean Score	Post-Program Mean Score	Percentage Improvement
Reading Fluency (WCPM)	95	128	35%
Reading Comprehension	68%	86%	26%
Writing Quality (Rubric Score)	2.4/4.0	3.2/4.0	33%
Academic Vocabulary	52%	73%	40%
Writing Mechanics	71%	89%	25%

Note: WCPM = Words Correct Per Minute; N=96 students; Assessment period: September 2023 - March 2024

### Implications for Madrasah Education

The findings from this study carry significant implications for literacy education in madrasah institutions across Indonesia and similar contexts internationally. First, the success of this integrated approach demonstrates that madrasah schools can effectively balance religious educational missions with contemporary literacy development goals. Rather than viewing these as competing priorities, successful programs recognize their complementary nature, using literacy skills to deepen engagement with religious texts while employing religious content as meaningful material for literacy development (Hashim & Langgulung, 2021). This integration approach may help address concerns among some Islamic educators about secular educational influences, demonstrating that literacy instruction can support rather than undermine religious educational objectives.



**Figure 1.** Strengthening the Madrasah Literacy Movement Program

Second, the importance of culturally responsive practices evident in this study suggests that successful literacy programs in madrasah contexts must honor students' Islamic identity and cultural backgrounds. Generic literacy interventions

developed without consideration of cultural and religious contexts may fail to engage students or may even create resistance if perceived as conflicting with community values (Paris & Alim, 2020). Madrasah educators should therefore seek literacy approaches that explicitly acknowledge and build upon students' cultural and linguistic resources, creating learning environments where students feel their identities are valued and their experiences are relevant to academic work.

Third, the professional development needs identified in this study highlight the importance of ongoing teacher learning in effective program implementation. Many madrasah teachers receive extensive religious education but may have limited training in contemporary pedagogical approaches, creating potential gaps in instructional capacity (Noor & Ahmad, 2022). Educational leaders in madrasah institutions should prioritize professional development in evidence-based literacy instruction, providing teachers with both theoretical understanding and practical strategies. This professional learning should be sustained rather than episodic, recognizing that pedagogical expertise develops over time through cycles of learning, application, and reflection.

Fourth, the resource challenges encountered in this program underscore the need for development of culturally appropriate literacy materials for Islamic educational contexts. Publishers, educational organizations, and madrasah institutions themselves should invest in creating high-quality texts that reflect Islamic values while meeting literary and pedagogical standards (Boyle & Charles, 2021). Digital technologies offer promising opportunities for resource development and distribution, potentially allowing madrasah schools to share materials and collaborate in curriculum development across geographic boundaries.

Finally, the positive outcomes achieved in this program despite various challenges demonstrate the feasibility and value of comprehensive literacy programs in resource-constrained settings. While ideal implementation would include abundant resources and optimal conditions, this study shows that thoughtful program design, committed educators, and adaptive problem-solving can produce meaningful improvements even with limitations. This finding should encourage madrasah educators and administrators who may feel that resource constraints prevent effective literacy programming, suggesting that strategic use of available resources combined with creative solutions can still yield significant student benefits (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the literacy program at MTs As'adiyah Putri Pusat Sengkang demonstrates that comprehensive, culturally responsive literacy interventions can significantly enhance language competencies among female students in Islamic educational settings. The program's success stemmed from its integrated design addressing multiple literacy components, its respect for students' Islamic identity and cultural backgrounds, its systematic implementation with ongoing adaptation based on student needs, and its commitment to teacher

professional development. Despite challenges including limited resources, varying teacher preparedness, and time constraints, strategic solutions enabled meaningful improvements in students' reading fluency, comprehension, writing quality, vocabulary knowledge, and language confidence. These findings contribute to growing evidence that madrasah institutions can effectively balance religious educational missions with contemporary literacy development goals, creating learning environments that honor tradition while preparing students for modern academic and professional demands. Future research should examine long-term sustainability of literacy program outcomes, investigate effective literacy instruction across different madrasah contexts, and explore how digital technologies might enhance literacy learning in Islamic educational settings. Educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners in Indonesia and internationally can draw upon these findings to strengthen language education in madrasah institutions, ultimately enhancing students' academic success and life opportunities while maintaining the distinctive Islamic character of these important educational institutions.

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