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INCREASING BASIC QURANIC LITERACY FOR MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH IN INDONESIA DURING THE NEW NORMAL PERIOD

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Abstract

The main guidelines for Muslims in living life are the Qur'an and Hadith. Therefore, Islamic teachings contained in the Qur'an and Hadith must be taught from an early age. For children in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), learning about the Quran begins with reading and writing activities, or what is known as basic literacy. This study seeks to explain how MI teachers and principals in the new normal era continue to improve basic Koran literacy for MI students. The research method used is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and documentation with the object of research at MI Tarbiyatul Banin Pekalongan Winong Pati. The results showed that in the new normal era of the COVID-19 pandemic, MI Tarbiyatul Banin Qur'an and Hadith teacher carried out mixed learning, which was carried out online and face-to-face alternately. The efforts made by MI Tarbiyatul Banin in improving the basic literacy of the Koran are getting children to read and write through practice. This activity is also carried out in collaboration with parents to monitor children's basic Koranic literacy at home. Teachers always practice reading and writing habits, both in class with their teachers and at home with parental guidance.

INTRODUCTION

The substance of Islamic teachings and the way of life for Muslims are found in the Al-Qur'an and Hadith. Understanding the Al-Qur'an-Hadith means studying the readings, the structure of the language, the meaning of the content, the reasons for the revelation of the verse or Hadith, to the context of how and why the verse or Hadith was conveyed by the Prophet. Al-Qur'an-Hadith learning which includes Al-Qur'an and Hadith reading,

memorization, understanding, and habituation of Islamic teachings so that they become a culture in life must be given to children to form character and a solid foundation of faith. In the end, the teachings contained in the Al-Qur'an and Hadith are truly capable of becoming life guidelines that will lead humans to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter.

Al-Qur'an-Hadith as a subject emphasizes good and correct literacy, understanding textual and contextual meanings, and practicing its contents in everyday life. No less important is growing a sense of love and high appreciation for the Al-Qur'an and Hadith as a way of life. The objectives are 1) to provide basic skills to students in reading, writing, getting used to, and enjoying reading the Qur'an and Hadith; 2) to provide understanding, comprehension, and appreciation of the contents of the verses of the Al-Qur'an and Hadith through example and habit; and 3) fostering and guiding student behavior by referring to the contents of the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith (KMA 183/2019).

Reading, writing, understanding, presenting, and displaying behavior towards something is a general understanding of literacy. Literacy can also be understood as the ability to speak or convey something to interact according to its purpose (Sari & Pujiono, 2017). Al-Qur'an literacy can be interpreted as the skills of reading, writing, speaking, understanding, conveying, and displaying behavior according to the Qur'an. For elementary school-age children, the skills that should be improved are the ability to read and write the Qur'an which can be called basic Al-Qur'an literacy.

In simple terms, literacy can be interpreted as the ability to read and write or it can also be interpreted as basic literacy, namely the earliest literacy skills. In its development, literacy is then understood as the ability to read, write, understand, convey, develop, and use something well. This definition of literacy can then be applied in various fields of life such as economic literacy, digital literacy, numeracy literacy, information literacy, and so on.

Indonesia ranks 62nd out of 70 countries in terms of literacy level based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2019. The low literacy rate in Indonesia underlies the Government in declaring the Movement School Literacy (GLS) is a movement to increase literacy at all levels of education. GLS describes literacy as the ability to access, understand, and use something intelligently through various activities including reading, viewing, listening, writing, and/or speaking. This literacy skill can be achieved well if people have good basic literacy, namely good interest in reading and writing so that other literacy skills will increase.

Today's literacy no longer means reading and writing but has developed into multi-literacy in all fields. Literacy can be interpreted as information literacy, critical thinking, and sensitivity to environmental changes. A person is said to be literate when he can understand something through the activity of reading the right information and doing something based on his understanding of the contents of the reading (Permatasari, 2015). This literacy is important for students and teachers in understanding everything, including understanding Islamic religious teachings, in an era of increasingly sophisticated information technology development.

Basic literacy (ability to read and write) of the Qur'an has an important role in understanding the teachings of the Islamic religion contained therein. The Qur'an itself encourages Muslims to always increase literacy. The scope of literacy in the Qur'an (Jayana, 2021) is very broad, starting from reading, observing, researching, understanding, analyzing, criticizing, and so on. So it is not an exaggeration to mention that literacy in Islam is the forerunner to the birth of Islamic sciences and knowledge (Romdhoni, 2012).

Al-Qur'an reading activity can be seen in three aspects, namely *iqra'*, recitation, and *tartil*. *Iqra'* or *qara'a* is a reading activity that involves the process of human cognition, namely understanding, studying, reciting, studying, analyzing, and so on. Recitations emphasize the practical aspects or actions following the contents of the reading. As for the meaning of *tartil*, it focuses on readings that are regular, solemn, not boring, and not excessive. (Nugraha & Abdurrohman, 2020).

For elementary school-age children, in learning the Qur'an it is best to get used to *iqra'* first. Moreover, the literacy skills of students in Indonesia are still relatively low, especially language literacy (Kharizmi, 2019) so the habit of reading and writing must continue to be pursued. This basic ability to read the Qur'an is the main capital for children to move towards a higher level of literacy. If a child has good reading skills and is strengthened by a high interest in reading, then the teachings of Islam in the Qur'an are easier to understand and practice.

The ability to read Arabic script for primary school students in Pati Regency before the pandemic was included in the good category. Alnashr's research shows that 31% of children can read very well, the same number as children with good abilities. Meanwhile, 19% of children got sufficient marks in terms of reading and 17% of children were not good at reading. One of the factors for the high ability to read Arabic for MI children is the study of Al-Qur'an Hadith and the majority of children taking part in Al-Qur'an learning (Al-Qur'an Education Park) in the afternoon (Alnashr, 2019).

During the pandemic, elementary school students' interest in reading decreased because they only did it when they received assignments from the teacher or orders from their parents with a duration of 10-30 minutes (Fahmi et al., 2021). Even though a child's reading interest greatly influences his reading ability (Georgiou et al., 2021) this means that a child's reading ability will be lower if his reading interest is low, including in terms of reading the Qur'an. The concerns of teachers and parents about the decline in interest in reading and the ability to read the Koran for MI students must be a common concern. Weak reading skills and low interest in reading children towards the Al-Qur'an will reduce their love for the Al-Qur'an.

The ability to read and write the Qur'an is a basic element in understanding and living the teachings contained therein. Good understanding and appreciation will encourage children to apply the values of the teachings of the Qur'an in everyday life. If the child's ability to read and write the Qur'an is low, then the understanding of the meaning of the teachings contents also cannot be maximized. Even though the Qur'an is the main life guide for a Muslim, studying it is an obligation and a necessity.

Departing from the above facts, MI Tarbiyatul Banin Pekalongan Winong Pati made various efforts so that students' reading and writing Al-Qur'an skills did not decrease. It is very interesting to explain how madrasahs are trying to improve basic Al-Qur'an literacy for their students amid a pandemic. This is because the ability to read and write the Qur'an is the main foundation for forming the character of an Islamic child to adulthood.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to explaining how to increase basic Al-Qur'an Hadith literacy which is implemented at MI Tarbiyatul Banin. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with teachers of the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject and the Head of MI. This interview was conducted to obtain data about the programs, policies, and activities prepared by MI in increasing basic Al-Qur'an Hadith literacy. In addition, this study also uses documentation to obtain other supporting data.

The collected data is then analyzed using interactive analysis (Miles et al., 2014) where the collected data is reduced and presented according to categories to draw conclusions based on existing data. The research results obtained were then analyzed more deeply using the theory of literacy and child development psychology. Thus the research results are more relevant to the current context and can be read properly by anyone.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exercise and Habituation of Reading and Writing Al-Qur'an

Al-Qur'an Hadith learning at MI Tarbiyatul Banin Pekalongan Winong during the pandemic was carried out in a mixed manner. Apart from carrying out online learning, the madrasah also carries out face-to-face learning by implementing strict health protocols. The schedule between online learning and face-to-face learning is arranged in such a way that it runs smoothly.

The implementation of Al-Qur'an-Hadith learning follows the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that applies to madrasah. The main guideline is the Decree of the Religion Ministry (KMA) no. 183 of 2019 concerning Curriculum for Islamic Religious Education and Madrasah Arabic, as well as KMA no. 184 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of the PAI Curriculum and Arabic in Madrasah. The competencies to be achieved in learning Al-Qur'an Hadith are the development of the core competencies and basic competencies contained in the KMA.

The main teaching material used in learning is the MI Al-Qur'an Hadith Textbook issued by the Directorate of KSKK, Religion Ministry of Indonesia. The book is available free of charge in pdf format which can be downloaded on the website of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion's KSKK Directorate. The textbooks issued by the Religion Ministry are available for all MI classes, from grade 1 to grade 6. This book is very helpful for teachers and students in improving their ability to read and write the Koran.

The method used by teachers of the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject most often is through drills/practices and assignments. The teacher instructs the children to always practice their ability to read, write, and memorize short letters in the Al-Qur'an. His assignments are in the form of reading, writing, and memorizing short letters or Hadith according to the basic competencies of the Al-Qur'an Hadith MI subject. This assignment requires children to practice continuously so that the child's ability to read and write the Qur'an will increase.

The tasks given to children aim to keep them practicing so that children will get used to reading and writing the Qur'an. Reading, writing, and memorizing assignments are individual so each child is obliged to submit their assignments to the teacher. When learning takes place face-to-face in class, each child advances to deposit their memorization. This activity is like the method that is widely used in Islamic boarding schools, namely sorogan. This activity will train children to be responsible for their respective duties and obligations.

The sorogan method is very appropriate to be used to improve the ability to read and write the Qur'an. The sorogan method is proven to be able to improve student's reading

skills in the yellow book (Jamaludin et al., 2019) In addition, sorogan also trains children to be patient, diligent, skilled, and active in learning (Afif, 2019). Sorogan, which is a classic method, has long been used in Islamic boarding schools, especially in teaching reading books. This classical method is still effective in improving the ability to read and write the Qur'an.

Habituated learning through assignments, exercises, and doing reading and writing activities together in class will create habits. If reading and writing the Qur'an has become a habit, then the child will be more interested in learning about the Qur'an. This is in line with the results of research related to habituation with students' reading and writing interests. The habit of reading and writing will further increase students' interest in reading and writing (Syahlan et al., 2019). The habit of *tadarus* and recitation will further improve the ability to read the Qur'an (Munawaroh, 2020).

This habituation method further complements the initial method in the form of reading and writing exercises. Assignments will force children to practice, practice will get children used to reading and writing, and if done continuously a habit of reading and writing Al-Qur'an will be born every day. High interest in reading and writing will further improve learning outcomes of Al-Qur'an Hadith as well as increase basic Al-Qur'an literacy, namely reading, and writing.

Reading and writing are skills that can be acquired through practice. The more you practice, the more your reading and writing skills will improve. Likewise, with the ability to read and write the Koran for MI-aged children, the teacher must always provide training and habituation in reading and writing the Koran. This basic Al-Qur'an literacy is important for the development of children in the future as well as for the development of Al-Qur'an literacy itself. After being able to read and write well, children will be able to understand and even describe and actualize the contents of the verses in the Qur'an following the times.

Reading and writing are skills that will develop through practice and habituation. Practicing the skills of reading and writing short surahs from the Qur'an will improve the basic literacy of children. Basic literacy is the ability to read, write and understand something so that you can explain it to others. Basic Al-Qur'an literacy is important for MI-aged children as the basis for character formation according to Islamic teachings. Thus, the child will love the Qur'an more and more by reading it every day so that in the end he understands the meaning of the verses and can apply them in everyday life.

Teacher Collaboration with Parents

One of the ways to improve basic Al-Qur'an literacy at MI Tarbiyatul Banin Pekalongan Winong is through learning the Al-Qur'an and Hadith. The learning carried out by the Al-Qur'an-Hadith teacher is to familiarize children with reading and writing through assignments, training, and habituation. This method is used when learning directly in class or online learning from home. Al-Qur'an-Hadith subjects play an important role in improving the ability to read and write Al-Qur'an.

Another effort made by the teacher in improving basic Al-Qur'an literacy is working with parents or guardians of students. The collaboration carried out by MI Tarbiyatul Banin by involving the child's parents is the right action. This is because the family environment is the closest environment for children. This is in line with Baumann's research which states that educational success is not only from the role of parties in schools such as principals and teachers but the role of the learning environment at home and parents (Baumann & Krskova 2016). Support from the family will greatly determine a child's ability to read and write.

Family education will support the success of formal education in schools, especially in shaping children's character. Families will be able to form children's personalities who care about others and are ready to face the challenges of the times because the family is the first and foremost school for a child (Alnashr, 2016). So, the collaboration of teachers and parents in increasing basic Al-Qur'an literacy for children is necessary. Teachers and parents must jointly form the character of children who love the Qur'an.

Teachers and parents are the two main components of the tri-education center, namely school, family, and community. The success of education can be achieved with the good cooperation of the three educational centers. Schools, families, and communities must have an aligned understanding and strategy for achieving educational goals. Without the cooperation of these three components, educational goals, especially in developing the potential and noble character of children, will be difficult to achieve.

The success of children's education lies in their interaction with the three educational centers. This interaction can be in the form of educative interaction in the learning process or non-educational interaction where children carry out daily activities with the community and the surrounding environment. The educational and non-educational interactions of children in their activities greatly determine the success of education (R B Sumarsono & Imron 2017). Therefore, teachers and parents must work together and support each other's children's education and together with the community create an environment that supports the formation of children's character.

Basic Al-Qur'an literacy of MI Tarbiyatul Banin Pekalongan Winong students can improve and develop properly because of good cooperation between teachers and parents. This is reinforced by the sociocultural conditions of the Pekalongan Winong people who are religious and educative. Pekalongan Village has many educational institutions, both schools, and madrasah as well as dozens of Islamic boarding schools, so it supports the increase in basic Al-Qur'an literacy. Pekalongan also got the nickname of the *santri* village because of the many Islamic boarding schools with hundreds of students in Pekalongan village.

CONCLUSION

Based on the presentation of the research results, it can be concluded that in the new normal era of the Covid-19 pandemic, Al-Qur'an-Hadith MI Tarbiyatul Banin teachers conduct mixed learning, which is carried out alternately online and face-to-face. Efforts were made by MI Tarbiyatul Banin in improving basic Al-Qur'an literacy, namely getting children to read and write through exercises and assignments to memorize short letters. This activity is also carried out in collaboration with parents to monitor children's basic Al-Qur'an literacy at home. Teachers always practice reading and writing habits, both in class with the teacher and at home with parental guidance.

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