The Importance of Social Capital in Developing Students' Literacy Skills in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Instilling literacy skills from an early age has a significant impact in forming the basis of a child's development and leads to strong literacy skills in the future. This research aims to analyze the role of social capital in growing student literacy in elementary schools. The method used in this research is library research. The procedures for researching this literature are (a) formulating the problem, (b) collecting data, (c) evaluating the suitability of the data, (d) analyzing and interpreting relevant data, and (e) organizing and presenting the results. Recognition of the important role of social capital in fostering literacy skills from an early age in elementary school is key to ensuring that future generations have a strong literacy foundation that will help them succeed in their education and everyday life. This article explains the importance of social capital in fostering literacy skills from an early age through the role of family, school and community. The results of this research support that investing in social capital for students' literacy education has a long-term impact in improving their literacy skills in the future.

Keywords: Social Capital, Literacy Skills, Elementary School

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current era of information and digitalization, literacy skills have become a fundamental need for individuals to access, understand and manage abundant information. Literacy skills are no longer limited to the ability to read and write, but also include the ability to understand complex content, evaluate information, and think critically (Carroll M. et al., 2018; Jatnika, 2019). These capabilities are not only important for personal life, but also for active participation in an increasingly complex and globally connected society. Based on data from the 2019 Progress International Reading Literacy Study test results report regarding the reading ability of students aged 9-10 years, Indonesia is ranked 44th out of 45 countries. Survey data conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2019 is also not much different (Fathani, 2016; Yasinta & Hamsa, 2022). Based on this data, the literacy level Indonesia at number 62 out of 70 countries surveyed.
One factor known to have a significant influence on the development of literacy skills is social capital. Talking about social capital cannot be separated from Pierre Bourdieu who first used the term social capital. Bourdieu emphasized that social capital also includes cultural understanding, knowledge and skills possessed by individuals through education, experience and the environment. Social capital is a form of capital related to the ownership or control of cultural capital, symbolic capital and scientific capital which includes knowledge, information, networks and relationships (Alemdar & Anilan, 2022; Haerussaleh & Huda, 2021). This understanding highlights the importance of education, socialization, and access to cultural resources in shaping opportunities and individual social mobility in society. In contrast to Bourdieu, Putnam places greater emphasis on the important role of participation in social organizations in forming society's social capital. According to Putnam, social capital refers to various elements in society, including social organizations and their membership that enable individuals to interact, collaborate, and build strong relationships. His views highlight how membership in a club, voluntary group, or social network can improve social cohesion and support the development of society as a whole.

Social capital is not a static phenomenon but is dynamic and organic. Their approach also emphasizes the role and function of social capital, rather than social capital itself. Cohen and Prusak (2001) focus on three principles, namely (1) how social capital works in an organization; (2) how social capital invests, and (3) how this investment brings benefits to organizations and individuals. In this context, social capital is defined as active connection capital between communities in the form of trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behavior that bind and shape members of human networks and communities (Boldureanu et al., 2020; Polatcan, M. & Balci, 2019). Furthermore, Coleman believes that social capital is not only about aspects of social relationships, but also about the system of values and norms that influence individual behavior in society. Nowadays, social capital has become increasingly popular in recent years among researchers, especially in the field of education. These various studies can be categorized into three groups. Firstly, the themes raised in social capital research are related to character education (Aeni, K., Zamroni, 2016; Jamali, 2021; Sumarni et al., 2015), school culture (Nurohmah et al., 2021; Parlar et al., 2020; Walidaini, 2020) and entrepreneurship (Silviana, 2021). Second, the subject of culture-based education research studies focuses on the younger generation (students) (Alemdar & Anilan, 2022; Silviana, 2021).

In the context of literacy skills, social capital can also act as a resource that supports and facilitates learning, sharing information, and developing literacy skills. Several studies have shown that social capital can influence literacy skills through several mechanisms. First, a strong network of relationships in social capital can provide better access to various sources of information, such as through discussions with friends, family, or the community. Such discussions allow individuals to develop a deeper understanding of various topics and broaden their horizons (Carroll M. et al., 2018; Xiao et al., 2020). Second, social norms that encourage literacy values, such as appreciation for reading books or producing writing, can shape individual motivation to improve their literacy skills. Such norms can also create an environment that supports sustainable learning among the community (Lundberg & Kilhamn, 2018; Tabroni et al., 2021). Third, high trust in social capital networks can encourage individuals to take risks in developing literacy skills without fear of negative judgment. This is especially true in learning contexts that involve trial and error, where individuals feel comfortable sharing their views and obtaining feedback from their peers. In this case, social capital acts as a support network that encourages children's intellectual exploration (Mishra, 2020; Riki et al., 2019).

These social-based educational studies have at least several shortcomings. The first concerns the themes raised in the research which are still focused on character education and
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entrepreneurship. Second, in terms of the subject studied, it has not yet reached basic education. Third, there has been no research that examines the role of social capital in developing students' literacy skills. This study tries to describe the role of social capital in developing elementary school students' literacy skills. This study aims to analyze richer insight into the factors that influence literacy development in the context of today’s increasingly connected and complex society. It is hoped that the results of this research can become a basis for designing more effective and sustainable literacy learning strategies.

2. METHODS

The method used in this research is library research, which is a research model based on literature study using data processing methods and library collection by looking for references from previous research which of course relate to the focus discussed and the topic in the research (Mendes; et al., 2019). The procedures for researching this literature are (a) formulating the problem, (b) collecting data, (c) evaluating the suitability of the data, (d) analyzing and interpreting relevant data, and (e) organizing and presenting the results.

Formulate the problem. The problem to be studied in this research is the importance of social capital in improving elementary school students' learning skills. To help solve the problem, the following questions guide this review: 1) how does social capital relate to students' literacy skills?; 2) what is the role of family social capital in improving elementary school students' literacy skills?; 3) what is the role of schools in improving elementary school students' literacy skills? 4) What is the role of the community in improving the literacy skills of elementary school students?

Data collection, the purpose of data collection was to find empirical studies including: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and literature reviews published in peer-reviewed journals to identify the role of social capital in improving elementary school students' literacy skills. The articles used in this literature review are articles obtained using Google Scholar and Science Direct by entering the keywords "social capital", "literacy skills". Data evaluation and analysis, after searching the literature using the procedures, keywords and databases described above. Next, researchers limited the literature search to specified keywords and databases. Therefore, this literature may not include sources that are not available through the criteria and databases searched. Based on the procedures described, 20 articles were obtained which were used as data in this research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The influence of social capital on children's literacy skills is a significant phenomenon in the context of children's education and development. Social capital refers to the network of social relationships, norms, values, and beliefs that exist in society. Children's involvement in these networks can have a positive impact on the development of their literacy skills. Social capital plays an important role in forming an environment that supports learning and mastery of reading, writing and speaking skills. Social capital has also taken new forms with the advent of digital platforms and social media. Children who grow up with positive influences from parents, teachers, and online groups that encourage literacy are likely to develop critical skills in understanding, evaluating, and using information from a variety of digital sources.

A study highlighting the importance of social capital in improving children's literacy skills shows that children who participate in rich and varied social interactions have a better chance of developing literacy skills. Social capital such as family support, interaction with peers, and access to quality books can provide the necessary stimulus for children's literacy
development. Children who see people in their environment reading and expressing an interest in literacy are more likely to follow that example. For example, when children see their parents or other family members reading regularly, they tend to be more motivated to do the same. Apart from that, social capital can also help overcome obstacles in literacy learning. Children who feel supported by their social environment tend to be more confident in exploring the world of literacy, overcome fears of failure, and build motivation to continue learning.

Social capital in a community context also plays a role in children's literacy skills. For example, community library programs, reading groups, and other social activities can broaden children's horizons and encourage their interest in literacy. Another study underscores the importance of an environment rich in written materials in shaping the literacy of children in various social groups. When children are exposed to diverse types of texts and points of view through interactions with family, friends, teachers, and communities, they develop flexibility of thinking and the ability to adapt to various contexts. In a global context, children who are familiar with language, culture and stories from various parts of the world tend to have broader insight and tolerance for differences. In James S Coman's research, social capital consists of two different perspectives, namely family social capital and environmental social capital (community and school). He stated that social capital in the family and community plays an important role in creating human capital in future generations.

In situations where children grow up in a multilingual environment, social capital can help in understanding and appreciating cultural and linguistic differences. Interactions with family members who speak a different language, or friends from diverse cultural backgrounds, can broaden a child's insight into the complexities of the linguistic and cultural world. This social capital can be a bridge to understanding different perspectives, helping children build empathy and cross-cultural understanding. Apart from that, social capital also plays an important role in building metacognitive and self-regulation skills that support literacy learning. Children who are supported by an environment that encourages reflection, problem solving, and achieving goals are more likely to be able to overcome literacy barriers and develop independence in learning. Parties who play an active role in implementing the literacy component is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Parties Who Play an Active Role in Implementing the Literacy Component**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Literacy Components</th>
<th>Parties who play an active role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Early childhood literacy</td>
<td>Parents, family, teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Basic literacy</td>
<td>formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Library literacy</td>
<td>formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Technological literacy</td>
<td>Formal education and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Media literacy</td>
<td>Formal education, family and community environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Visual literacy</td>
<td>Formal education, family and community environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

**The Role of Family Social Capital in Improving Literacy Skills**

It cannot be denied that social capital in the family is the starting point that embeds positive habits in children. A study by Coleman (1968) entitled "equality of educational opportunity" found that parents and the home environment are much bigger determining factors in a child’s future than school. According to this research, the role and background of parents is more important in contributing to school performance. Further research results also concluded that children born to highly educated parents tend to have good academic achievements (Anggraini et al., 2019). These families create an environment where
educational achievement is valued and expected. Additionally, when children are provided with a nurturing environment that provides behavioral guidance, the impact on their educational success will be powerful and positive. The family is a vehicle for educating, nurturing and socializing children, developing the abilities of all its members so that they can carry out their functions well in society (Mardliyah et al., 2020; Suryawati et al., 2020). Within the family, social capital can include relationships between family members that encourage open discussions, share stories, and provide appreciation for children's literacy efforts. This not only strengthens technical skills, but also creates a positive atmosphere towards learning. In this context, previous study observed that children's opportunities for learning are not limited to time at school, but involve everyday life experiences at home (Liu & Chung, 2022; Senechal, 2006).

The findings of this research identify the role of social capital in the family which enables participating parents to grow literacy skills through three strategies, namely modelling, mentoring and teaching. Parents can utilize social capital abilities to develop children's first literacy skills through modelling. Parents have a very strong influence on their children's role models. Whether positive or negative, parents are the first and foremost role models for children. Parents become the pattern for forming a child's "Way of Life" or lifestyle. The way children think and act is shaped by the way their parents think and act. In this way, parents inherit their actions and thought patterns for their children. Research shows that children who have parents who read stories, encourage reading, and provide access to reading materials tend to have better literacy skills (Fadli, 2020; Inten, 2017). Parental education through various means (e.g. workshops or seminars, parents' days and school visits) is very important so that parents can experience playing and build a knowledge base to guide their children in playing at home.

The second role of family social capital is mentoring. Social capital in the family can be a bridge between literacy in formal language and literacy in the child's mother tongue or everyday language. Children who are able to use the language they use in everyday life for literacy purposes tend to be more engaged and have a deeper understanding of literacy material. Social capital in the form of support for using the mother tongue in literacy contexts can help children relate learning to their personal experiences. Apart from that, the influence of social capital can also influence children's literacy choices, including the type of reading they choose. When they engage in positive interactions with family members, friends, or teachers who recommend certain books or reading materials, they are more likely to explore those materials with enthusiasm. This is consistent with previous research showing that various types of parental involvement are conducive to child development (Fatmawati, 2019; Siu & Keung, 2021). Bridging social capital can be fostered by bringing parents together to participate in joint activities with children (McLean et al., 2018; Tabroni et al., 2021). The findings of this research are also in line with the views of Bourdieu (1986), who views social capital not only as actual but also potential resources obtained from membership. In Bourdieu's view, the existence of relationships with both actual and potential resources provides each member with the support of collectively owned social capital (Acar, 2011; Bianchi & Vieta, 2020).

Third, Teaching, parents as teachers in the family environment. Parents teach their children about the basic laws or principles of life. In the family environment, social capital not only influences daily interactions related to literacy, but also creates norms and expectations about the importance of reading, writing and speaking well. Parents who show enthusiasm for literacy tend to encourage children to value and associate literacy with fun and benefits. This is where parents are tested for their competence to create conscious abilities in children, namely that children are very aware of what they are doing and understand the reasons why they are doing it. This social capital not only improves technical
reading skills, but also builds a love and interest in literacy. These kinds of interactions also help children connect literacy to their personal experiences, motivating them to learn more.

**The Role of School Social Capital in Improving Student Literacy Skills**

In fact, schools already have the social and cultural capital to become a tool to improve the quality of education in schools. Literacy is more than just reading and writing, but includes thinking skills using sources of knowledge in print, visual, digital and auditory forms. In the current digital era, this ability is called information literacy. Clay (2001) explains that the components of information literacy consist of early literacy, basic literacy, library literacy, media literacy, technology literacy and visual literacy. In the Indonesian context, early literacy is needed as a basis for acquiring literacy at the next stage. However, the social reality is that there is a tendency that in the world of education the role of social capital is still not assessed as the most important aspect in the process of improving the quality of education, especially with regard to students' literacy skills. In fact, according to several studies of social capital in various forms, community involvement in education has been accepted as a source of social capital, which greatly influences success Education (Fadli, 2020; Mishra, 2020). There is a tendency that schools do not realize and consider it important that social capital is very strategic to be developed in the patterns of social relationships that occur in the learning process in the family and school (Amini et al., 2023; Wandasari et al., 2019). Developing school social capital in growing students' literacy skills can be done in at least five ways, namely (1) building a network of relationships that encourages literacy; (2) enforcing strong literacy norms among members of the entire school; (3) rewarding students' literacy achievements (4) providing students with access to literacy resources; and (5) teachers and staff become role models for students.

First, building a network of relationships that encourages literacy. A school environment that facilitates interaction between students, teachers and school staff, and encourages collaboration between individuals, plays an important role in improving students' literacy skills. Discussions, forums, and group-based activities help students broaden their literacy horizons. In fact, schools and peers have a significant influence in developing children's literacy skills (Rohandini et al., 2022; Shabrina, 2022). Children who participate in reading groups or literacy projects with their peers tend to have higher motivation for reading and public speaking. The findings of this study are in line with other research findings which conclude that social capital in the form of support from teachers and classmates can stimulate in-depth discussions and text analysis, improve content understanding and speaking skills (Fathurrohman, 2019; Yin et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2017). Social capital in the form of good relationships between teachers and students can create an environment that supports sustainable literacy development. On the other hand, collaboration and exchanging ideas with classmates also develops speaking, listening and critical thinking skills.

Second, enforcing strong literacy norms for members of all schools. Schools with a strong literacy culture encourage students to read and explore a wide variety of texts. This norm is manifested in literacy programs launched by schools, including periodic reading activities, literary performances and writing competitions (McLean et al., 2018; Salma, 2019). The results of this research are in line with other research findings which conclude that by providing learning opportunities for individuals and groups as a whole, by developing relational trust and shared norms through interaction. Some researchers have also investigated how norms can build relational trust in schools through their interactions, and how trust functions as a resource for school improvement (Fadli, 2020; Yin et al., 2022).

Third, giving awards to students' literacy achievements. School social capital is also reflected in teacher concern through appreciation and recognition of student literacy achievements. Positive support from teachers and classmates motivates students to continue
developing their literacy skills. A study concluded that teachers giving positive words to students can arouse their interest in reading (Polatcan, M. & Balci, 2019; Safitri & Dafit, 2021). Apart from using words, motivating students can also be in the form of giving gifts or rewards. The teacher gives a reward as a sign that the student has succeeded in that day's lesson material. Giving prizes or rewards can be done in the middle of learning or at the end of learning as a form of evaluating student learning. In this way, every student has the opportunity to receive school awards.

Fourth, provide access to literacy resources to students. Schools with strong social capital have better access to various literacy resources, such as well-stocked libraries, interactive learning software, and access to digital literacy content. Reading material that is attractive to students will motivate students to read the reading text seriously. The reading materials given to lower classes and higher classes are different. The lower class prefers reading materials that contain simple information, are illustrated, are inspirational and imaginative, have a fantasy fable genre, and contain messages that are appropriate to the developmental stage of low class students. This is different from high class students who prefer reading with complex information, inspirational and imaginative, folklore genre, and containing moral messages according to the development stage of high class students. The findings of this study are consistent with current literature, which understands that teachers' professional roles influence the classroom environment and the opportunities available for children to engage in play lessons simultaneously (Magfiroh & Suryana, 2021; Tabroni et al., 2021). In other words, teachers share their experiences in trying play activities as they engage in professional sharing and collaboration to increase their understanding of how to build social capital-based learning and how to help children build their own learning.

The five teachers and staff become role models for students. Teachers and school staff who act as literacy role models inspire students to develop literacy interests and skills. Teachers who are actively involved in guiding students in understanding complex texts have a major influence on students' literacy abilities. Teacher attitudes also have a strong influence on children's perceptions and interest in literacy. This is supported by other research which reveals that by direct modelling, children are able to differentiate the sounds in the pronunciation of a word before it is done (Maratussholihah & Wibowo, 2022; Sukmawati, 2021). Teachers who show dedication to teaching literacy using interesting and interactive methods can shape children's positive views about learning to read and write.

However, the impact of social capital should not be considered static or uniform. Social capital can have different effects on children with diverse backgrounds. Children from families with different economic or cultural limitations may experience challenges in accessing the same literacy resources (Anjani et al., 2019; Hijjayati et al., 2022). In this case, it is important to identify and overcome these barriers through appropriate support and intervention. In addition, every child has different needs, interests and learning. In an effective educational approach, respect for diversity in children's social capital needs to be taken into account. An inclusive approach understands individual differences and encourages children to develop literacy that matches their potential and interests. In other words, teachers must respect diversity at school and in the classroom, while seeking to reap the benefits of social capital. This requires respect for student choices and the elimination of overt and covert pressure on students to mold them into a uniform identity and/or goals.

**The Role of Community Social Capital in Improving Literacy Skills**

Community as an effort to maintain activities that can be used as the parent of the literacy movement is group learning of students in the community. This activity is an alternative to tutoring. At the same time, through self-funding with encouragement from
community leaders, the community is actually willing to be involved in cultivating literacy through study groups in each TBM in the community.

First, build a learning community that supports student literacy development. Research conducted by previous study illustrates how community social capital can encourage the development of literacy skills through a process of social interaction that exists (Parvathamma & Pattar, 2013; Sukmana, 2021). The results of this research state that in communities that promote a culture of literacy, positive norms related to literacy become an inseparable part of everyday life. It inspires individuals to actively participate in literacy activities, such as reading, writing, and sharing information with others. The findings of this research are in line with the results of other research concluding that social capital can provide an important impetus in empowering individuals to act as leaders and drivers of change in efforts to increase literacy (Sukmana, 2021). Thus, the results of this research confirm that community social capital not only facilitates physical access to literacy resources, but also plays a central role in forming collective values, norms, and commitments that encourage the sustainable growth of literacy skills. A study conducted by also provides in-depth insight into the role of community social capital in developing literacy skills.

Their research results show that communities with strong social capital tend to have more literacy initiatives, such as community reading groups, book clubs, and training programs. Social interaction in this context provides an opportunity for community members to support each other in efforts to improve their literacy skills. Through a network of contacts in the community, students can get recommendations for reading material that suits their interests and literacy level (Fitriyani & Nugroho, 2022; Herwina & Qomariah, 2021). Social capital plays a key role in facilitating the exchange of books and literacy materials between community members. Through these exchanges, literacy resources can be distributed more equitably, providing greater access to individuals who may have limited access (Hidayah et al., 2019; Solikha et al., 2021). Additionally, this research underscores the role of mentors and authority figures in society in influencing an individual's motivation and determination to become more literate.

The second encourages social interaction that focuses on the exchange of information and ideas. The role of society in building discussion and literacy groups is an important foundation for developing knowledgeable and critical thinking individuals. Research has confirmed that participation in community literacy groups can improve reading and writing skills, which in turn strengthens an individual's comprehension and communication (Fahri & Qusyairi, 2019; Fatimah & Santiana, 2017). In this context, the community acts as a prime mover in the formation of groups such as book discussion groups or reading clubs, which create an environment that stimulates the exchange of ideas, improves communication skills, and develops a strong literacy culture. Through interactions in this literacy group, community members not only hone language skills, but also build a sense of cultural identity and increase their sense of ownership of the learning process. Thus, the role of the community in facilitating discussion and literacy groups not only impacts individual development, but also makes a sustainable contribution to the cultural and social richness of the community as a whole.

Overall, the research findings confirm that the social capital of the family, community and school has an important role in creating an environment that supports students' literacy development. Families who are active in providing support, reading with their children, and providing access to reading materials tend to have children who are more skilled in literacy. On the other hand, communities that encourage literacy by providing easily accessible public libraries, community literacy programs, and social norms that promote reading habits, also play a role in improving students' literacy skills. Schools also have a big impact, with well-trained teachers, effective literacy programs, and a school culture that supports literacy as
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important factors in the formation of students' literacy skills. Collaborative efforts between these three elements can improve the quality of literacy education and help students become more competent and skilled readers.

4. CONCLUSION

Social capital in the family, school and community forms an important foundation in growing the literacy skills of elementary school students. Family involvements in literacy, support from the school environment, and collaboration with local communities have a significant impact on children's literacy development. Overall, social capital in the family, school and community are interrelated and mutually reinforcing elements in efforts to improve the literacy skills of elementary school students. By understanding the importance of social capital in literacy, we can design more effective educational strategies to improve students' literacy skills broadly. By understanding and utilizing this social capital, a more holistic educational approach is designed to broadly improve students' literacy skills, helping them become more competent and skilled readers in the future.

5. REFERENCES


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