# Development of Literacy in Islamic Education in the COVID-19 **Pandemic Era for Elementary School**

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# **Abstract**

The challenges of education during the Corona Virus Diseases (COVID-19) pandemic are increasingly complex. The internalization process of literacy activities needs to be improved in an effort to improve the quality of human resources in the global realm. This research aims to explore strategies in improving the literacy of students during COVID-19 and the problems faced by teachers during the literacy development process at Mutiara Hati Elementary School in Malang, Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative approach with case study methods. The data source was taken using observation, interview and documentation with data analysis techniques using triangulation techniques with three stages; collection, reduction, and conclusion. The results showed four strategies can be done to improve literacy activities that, strategies used can be done to improve the literacy culture of students through four ways; webinar activities, ongoing mentoring, work monitoring and distribution of students' literacy results. While in the problematic aspects faced by teachers there are three aspects, namely the limitations of competency in designing media, the limitations of discussion space on the work of students and the lack of supporting facilities to monitor the work of students. The findings of this study have manifestly shown that the integration of media, strategies and competencies of ideal teachers can provide positive output for creativity and critical thought processes of students in making work. This study recommends further research to test the effectiveness of literacy activities and the use of broader research methods of reach and problematic solving faced by teachers.

**Keyword:** COVID-19 Pandemic, elementary school, students, literacy, short story

### Abstrak

Tantangan dunia pendidikan dimasa pandemi Corona Virus Deases (COVID-19) semakin kompleks. Proses internalisasi kegiatan literasi perlu ditingkatkan sebagai upaya peningkatan kualitas sumber daya manusia dalam ranah global. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeskplorasi strategi dalam peningkatan literasi peserta didik di masa COVID-19 dan problematika yang dihadapi guru saat proses pembinaan literasi di Sekolah Dasar Mutiara Hati Kota Malang, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Sumber data diambil menggunakan observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi dengan teknik analisis data menggunakan teknik triangulasi dengan tiga tahapan; pengumpulan, reduksi, dan pengambilan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat empat strategi yang dapat dilakukan untuk meningkatkan kegiatan literasi bahwa, strategi yang digunakan dapat dilakukan untuk meningkatkan budaya literasi peserta didik melalui empat cara; kegiatan webinar, pendampingan yang berkelanjutan, monitoring karya serta distribusi hasil literasi peserta didik. Sedangkan pada aspek problematika yang dihadapi guru terdapat tiga aspek, yakni keterbatasan kompetensi dalam mendesain media, keterbatasan ruang diskusi terhadap karya peserta didik serta minimnya fasilitas pendukung pemantauan karya peserta didik. Temuan penelitian ini secara nyata telah menunjukkan adanya integrasi media, strategi dan kompetensi guru yang ideal dapat memberikan output positif bagi kreativitas dan proses berpikir kritis peserta didik dalam membuat karya. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penelitian berikutnya untuk menguji efektivitas kegiatan literasi dan penggunaan metode penelitian yang lebih luas jangkauannya dan penyelesaian problematika yang dihadapi guru.

Kata Kunci: Pandemi COVID-19, sekolah dasar, peserta didik, literacy, sejarah singkat

## Introduction

Education is one of the most important components in building a nation's civilization (Cusanelli & Trevallion, 2020). Without education, the quality of human resources can't go well. Education is a very important domain in building the human mindset into a globally competitive human being (Benešová & Tupa, 2017). The challenges of the 21st-century are increasingly complex, especially in the increase in human resources and the demands of must-have skills. One form of demand for 21st-century skills is critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration skills (Singh, 2019; Febriani et al., 2020; Halveson, 2018). As the description of the demands of the 21st century can be detailed in figure 1.

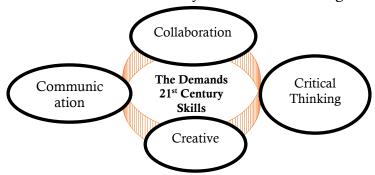


Fig 1. The demands of 21st-century skills

**Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education** :: Volume 4, Number 2, September 2020/1442

Through these indicators, education should be able to internalize the values of 21st-century skills in the learning process. The learning process of the 21st-century is expected to encourage critical, innovative and creative thinking skills to implement collaborative and cooperative learning (Murniyetti et al., 2016; Rohman, 2017; Syafril et al., 2020).

Based on the research, Indonesia still lags far from the developed world. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that Indonesia's student comprehension skills were followed by 65 countries (Greene & Larsen, 2018). The test results showed that Indonesian students were still ranked 64th with a score of 396, while the average OECD score during testing was 496 (Ministry of Education, 2016).

It is a highlight for the highest educational institution in Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture to develop literacy activities carried out in each unit of education called the School Literacy Movement (Nurohmah et al., 2020). This activity has been socialized by the Ministry of Education and Culture in early 2016 to all levels of education in Indonesia. Under the directive, each school strives to implement and grow literacy.

Literacy was an important element for facing the industrial revolution 4.0 (Rahman et al., 2019). Rapid technological advances must be faced with high levels of literacy skills. The activities can be encourage reading culture, produce works and other innovations (Hanik, 2020). But a new challenge in the development of literacy today is the learning process carried out at home. This is because the COVID-19 virus is widespread around the world. There is no denying that Indonesia has adopted online learning for 8 months (Pininta, 2020).

On that basis, face-to-face classroom is restricted to stop the spread of COVID-19. Through distance learning, schools can find the best strategies to improve the culture of students, especially in elementary schools. This is because the instincts of students at the elementary school level can still be formed through continuous habituation (Fatimah & Sari, 2018).

Some previous studies have discussed virtual learning in writing poetry Juwitasari (2020), media that can be used in the learning process Wargadinata (2020), or improving learning through google classroom Sadiku (2015). Literacy development is also based on habituation from all parties of the school Kembud (2017), in addition to research on the school literacy movement is can improve the reading and writing skills of students (Batubara & Ariani, 2018). Based on previous research, there needs to be a fundamental study of digital literacy in elementary schools as an effort to improve the literacy culture of students and to know the problems faced by teachers in the process of internalizing digital literacy in SD Mutiara Hati. Malang, Indonesia.

Research related to literacy issues in schools has been widely reviewed by previous researchers such as Juwitasari (2020), Kembud (2017), Coal & Ariani (2018), but it's focus only on literacy issues in general. Meanwhile, research that discusses specifically literacy in Islamic education in the covid-19 era has not been revealed. The fundamental difference between this study and previous research is that the researchers previously discussed literacy in general, but this issue of research discussed literacy in Islamic education in the era of covid-19. Therefore, this research aimed to explore strategies in improving the literacy of students during COVID-19 and the problems faced by teachers during the literacy development process at Mutiara Hati Elementary School in Malang, Indonesia.

#### Literature Review

Currently, the literacy movement is undergoing rapid development. Literacy awareness is an important point of concern. This is because it is not only for adults but for elementary school students. As literacy at the moment is very dynamic and sustainable. Therefore the understanding of literacy needs to be reviewed holistically and integrally from all aspects.

The sense of literacy is the competence that every human being has to understand the information in a diverse form; information in reading and writing (Marlina, 2019). In this case, literacy undergoes a continuous dynamism tailored to the development of the times. At first, literacy was limited to writing and reading

Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education :: Volume 4, Number 2, September 2020/1442

(Zauche et al., 2016). At this time literacy is undergoing a very wide development and developing. Based on the meaning of the terminology that while etymologically the term literacy itself comes from the Latin "literatus" which means the person who learns. In this case, literacy is very closely related to the process of reading and writing (Harjali, 2019).

Education Development Center (EDC) menyatakan bahwa Literasi lebih dari sekedar keterampilan membaca dan menulis. Namun lebih dari itu, literasi adalah kemampuan individu untuk menggunakan segala potensi dan keterampilan yang dimilikinya dalam hidupnya (Zauche et al., 2016). With this understanding, literacy includes the ability to read words and read the world. The definition of School Literacy in the context of GLS is the ability to access, understand, and use something intelligently through various activities, including reading, viewing, listening, writing, and speaking (Batubara & Ariani, 2018).

The Education Development Center (EDC) states that Literacy is more than just reading and writing skills. But more than that, literacy is an individual's ability to use all the potentials and skills he has in his or her life (Zauche et al., 2016). With that understanding literacy includes the ability to read words and read the world. The understanding of School Literacy in the context of GLS is the ability to access, understand, and use things intelligently through various activities, including reading, viewing, listening, writing, and speaking (Coal & Ariani, 2018).

One form of literacy is basic literacy. It is a basic skill in reading, writing, listening and counting. The basic literacy goal is to optimize a person's ability to read, write, communicate and count. Through basic literacy, students can develop their ability to produce works and benefit the wider world.

Regarding the optimization of current literacy activities is digital literacy Nurohmah et al., (2020), he revealed that digital literacy plays a role in improving and providing new insights according to the interests of the work to be created, such as using Zoom media and Google Classroom. Other educations are also used to produce works such as virtually adopted poems (Wigham et al., 2018). The use of

several learning applications can provide positive output in overcoming the limitations of the learning process in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Method

This research uses qualitative methods through a case study approach. Qualitative research aims to examine students' perceptions and analyze strategies for developing literacy based on the experience of students holistically. The case study research process is based on the description of words and language in a natural context (Moleong, 2007; Engkizar et al., 2018; Amnda et al., 2020; Rahawarin et al., 2020). The case study method is focused on the strategy of developing literacy and literacy activities at SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang (Yin, 2003). The case study research was chosen because of the need to explain and uncover overall development literacy strategies as well as literacy activity problems in covid-19 emergencies.

Data collection techniques used include interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are conducted on grade 5 literacy teachers in 2019/2020. Furthermore, observation is used to obtain information about the literacy environment in online classroom learning. Documentation is used to collect information about class administration and learning processes from academic guidence. The analysis techniques used are based on the triangulation of data collected and described, reduced, and verified. Data collection is carried out from early May to June. The data is then reduced by selecting details that support research topics and eliminating unnecessary data details.

# Findings and Discussion

The literacy development process at SDIT Mutiara Hati Kota Malang is an important program in creating a superior generation. Conceptually, literacy is currently rapidly developing in schools and other educational institutions. This is seen not only in writing literacy, but digital literacy, the environment, and others. Literacy writing found in SDIT Mutiara Hati can be developed through writing in the form of short stories. The short stories produced by students are very diverse. The process of planning this literacy program was originally from the study of tour

**Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education** :: Volume 4, Number 2, September 2020/1442

(outdoor learning) students outside the school environment. After outdoor activities, students are required to write down their experiences in short stories. This activity is one of the mandatory activities supported by teacher guidance.

Teachers are tasked with providing moral support in completing the work of students. Each task has a set time limit based on school policy. Through the application of such deadlines, students are also trained to instill a disciplined attitude towards their obligations. The written work is given to the guidance teacher to get input and advice on the resulting work. Based on one of the interviews, the teachers at SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang, Indonesia. Here's an interview excerpt in table 1 below:

Table 1. Interview Excerpts

Theme	Informant	Interview Excerpts
Webinar Activities	Teacher	"Before to covid-19, the school conducted an offline writing briefing, inviting a Radar Malang reporter. This writing briefing is done before the study tour, which essentially opens up students' insights to get an idea of how to write their travel story during the study tour. With covid-19, students can't go on study tours as usual, so we haven't asked students to write. However, the school created a writing competition for teachers. During covid-19, teachers also received writing training by inviting speakers from Radar Malang online."
Continuous Mentoring	Teacher	"Incidentally, students are familiar with the use of computers, because since grade 1 there have been computer lessons. Students can already type the story of their study tour on a computer. Regarding special assistance does not exist, we only hold writing training once every year before the departure of the study tour. Then after the study tour, the school usually gives two or three weeks to collect the results of the writing."
Monitoring Works	Teacher	"Students' writings are collected via school email. For paper size, typeface and others have been determined by the school, although at the time of collection there are still students whose format is not suitable,

		sentences made by students are a little difficult to understand and too many photos are included. The collection deadline is one week, for those who do not collect or belatedly collect the consequences the writing will not be published. After that, TU will usually combine all students' writings. Then the writing is given to a teacher, who is appointed by the foundation to edit the writing for two weeks."
Distribution of results literacy of students	Teacher	"A draft of the learner's book is given to the publisher to create a cover design, the title determination is usually discussed with the publisher and remains consulted to the principal. After the design of the finished book and the price is agreed, then the school prints. The problem is in marketing, because until now it is still the consumption of schools."

Based on the information, there are four concrete steps in developing literacy writing students at SDIT Mutiara Hati era COVID-19. This was done to improve the culture of electricity. The activities can be viewed as follows.

First, a webinar activity. SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang does not provide special guidance to students in writing books. There is only one supply meeting with speakers from outside the school held every year before the study tour. The school invited Radar Malang journalists to teach writing techniques to students. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang students have no longer learned to write directly, but online.

Second, ongoing mentoring. The students of SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang received continuous assistance after following the writing briefing. In this mentoring process, students are given the freedom to write stories about their travels during the study tour every day. Then after the study tour, usually the teacher gives two or a maximum of three weeks for the student to collect his writing. The collection of students' writing is done by writing sent by school email.

Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education:: Volume 4, Number 2, September 2020/1442

Third, monitoring. At SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang the task of monitoring the work of students is entrusted to a teacher appointed directly by the foundation to conduct editing within two weeks. This monitoring process is carried out in order to evaluate the work of students before it is published into a book. This monitoring is done to discuss the mistakes of students in composing words or about sentences that are still confused. This monitoring process also sometimes encounters obstacles, this is due to the delay of students in collecting revision text.

Fourth, the distribution of students' literacy results. After monitoring, the draft of the learner's book is submitted to the publisher for cover design and title determination; title determination is the result of discussions between the publisher and the principal. Then after the book design and price are agreed upon, the students' work will be printed and distributed. Regarding the distribution of literacy results of students, there are still obstacles, because from 2016 until now it is still consumed by the school, not the consumption of the community.

The idea of publishing a book by students came about, starting when the students of SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang held their first study tour. One of the school programs is a study tour both at home and abroad. At that time the principal assumed that such a moment should not be missed, so the idea of recording the students' writings appeared. Hopefully, every student has memories of their study tour and makes it a book.

This short story writing activity was originally applied to students in grades 5 and 6 who had recommended the purpose of their study tour. Before the study tour is departed, all students in grades 5 and 6 will participate in the study tour and be given the facility. A writing briefing that essentially opens up students' insights to get an idea of how to write and how to write it.

SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang students love literacy. This is demonstrated by the high enthusiasm of students towards writing programs. Besides students are also accustomed to using computers, so writing short stories related to travel during study tours becomes easy. Because since the first grade there have been computer lessons. Every year if there is a study tour, there will be a book published by the

students afterward. There have been 4 books published since the first study tour was held until 2020. Some of the published works are: 1) Achieving The Dream of Chasing Stars, 2) KISPEN (Short Story of the Jogja-Malaysia-Singapore Study Tour), 3) Every step has a story, 4) Malaysia is cheerful, Jogja is extraordinary. Some of the published works can be viewed through the following images.



Fig 2. Students' first work



Fig 3. The work of both students



Fig 4. The third result of the students' work

Writing training is only held once a year before the departure of the study tour. SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang invites journalists from Radar Malang to teach writing techniques. After that, students are given the freedom to write stories about their travels during the study tour. Then students are given two or a maximum of three weeks to collect their writing. The collection of writing is done by sending short story manuscripts via school email.

Students are given a one-week submission time, for those who do not collect or collect late as a result the writing will not be published. After the writing is collected, the school administration will compile all the writings of the students. Then the writing will be given to the teacher who has been appointed by the foundation to edit the writing for two weeks. After the draft of the book was completed, SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang submitted it to the publisher to create a cover design and determine the title that had been discussed and consulted with the publisher and principal. Once the design of the book has been completed and the price has been agreed, then the learner's book is ready to be printed.

Literacy is an activity that impacts superior human resources. Because literacy requires an emphasis on the world of reading and writing (Hanik, 2020). In any pattern of literacy activities are not separated from the activities of reading, thinking, and writing (Suyono et al., 2017). The thought process starts by planning things to be written to the process of completing the work. This increasingly competitive world demands a smart, creative and innovative generation. All of these skills can be realized of them through creative reading and writing activities (Teguh, 2017).

Literacy or communication skills in children will affect their social, emotional and cognitive development (Basyiroh, 2017; Putra et al., 2020). If the child can communicate with the surrounding environment, it will foster confidence and be able to socialize or be accepted in the environment. Basyiroh's statement above emphasizes that language skills affect a child's social and personal adjustments and will certainly affect the child's emotional and cognitive development. Ability to communicate; Oral or writing skills such as reading and

writing skills are basic skills that everyone must-have. When is the right time to learn to read and write and how to learn it has been of concern to many.

The demands of this century make the younger generation need to read both from home and abroad. As statements about reading and writing are good early benchmarks for education (Nopilda & Kristiawan, 2018). Limited activity during the COVID-19 pandemic did not follow SDIT Mutiara Hati's steps in developing literacy. As it is known that the need to read and write is an absolute necessity for the development of human knowledge (Rokhman et al., 2014).

Literacy writing is also one of the efforts to advance SDIT Mutiara Hati to spread creative and critical thinking characters according to the demands of the 21st century. Because short story work requires the support of creativity and critical thought processes of students in processing and producing works (Sipayung et al., 2018). This can trigger students' ongoing innovation through real-life experiences that are then translated into short story writing. In this 21st era, the literacy skills of students are very closely related to the demands of reading skills to be able to understand information analytically, critically and reflectively (Farikah, 2019). Experimental learning also gives students an understanding that things can become more meaningful (Fryer & Bovee, 2016). This shows that the work created by the learner is one of his experiences carried out in daily activities.

One of the challenges in the covid-19 pandemic era, the limitations of discussion during mentoring became one of the weaknesses in developing the literacy of students. It demands the skills and competence of teachers in developing online media in the mentoring process. One of the causes is also the fact that the lack of teacher training in developing the ability to design online learning (Syafril et al. 2019). As the competence of teachers is not only competency in teaching but professional competency that supports the process of developing literacy in the online system (Yusnita et al., 2018; Kasmar et al., 2019; Febriani & Anasruddin, 2020). It is also said that teacher competency is an important point in the success of student learning (Safutri et al., 2020).

Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education: Volume 4, Number 2, September 2020/1442

As well as efforts to overcome these limitations, discussions between teachers are one of the efforts to improve their competence. Through the discussion comes suggestions and directions related to the problems faced. In addition to discussions with peers, the principal's guidance becomes the main point in the development of teacher competencies. Through the intermediary of these measures it is also said that the competence of teachers becomes a driver for students to maximize their performance in producing works (Febriani et al., 2020). Other results suggest that teachers should be able to manage online classrooms for mentoring in the COVID-19 era (Suryaman et al., 2020).

To improve the quality of online learning on an ongoing basis, there are some important things that educational institutions must work on. First, educational institutions must start improving facilities and infrastructure to support online learning such as infrastructure, Learning Management System (LMS), and adequate repositories. Second, increase the capacity of educators who support the implementation of online mentoring, such as improving internal competencies of preparing media and connectivity and managing online learning. Third, the continuous expansion of platform support technology to support the remote learning process. Support of various technology platforms for learning activities is expected to continue until after the covid-19 emergency ends. Some of these efforts were made to prepare online learning in the literacy education process to be implemented optimally (Arifa, 2020).

One of the important points of literacy impact is the increased ability of students to process real information on written information. Thus, the written communication process can be trained to express its ideas (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). This is because communication is one of the domains in the demands of 21st-century skills (Robinson, & Kay, 2010). Through the coaching and habituation of writing literacy, students can develop their potential early on through the writing gymnastics that occurs in life. As stated that the habituation stage will affect the results of students' literacy skills (Batubara & Ariani, 2018).

Through literacy development efforts at SDIT Mutiara Hati Malang, students can instill critical and creative thinking skills and improve written communication. This will have an impact on the character of students who develop with age. In the literacy program of the school, of course, there must be discipline from all parties; not only the teacher but also the principal.

All of this requires commitment and struggle from all parties to succeed in the school literacy movement. Literacy facilities also need to be developed as one of the efforts to develop literacy culture in elementary schools (Faradina, 2017). Without all that, the school literacy movement would just disappear like any other program launched by the previous government. The School Literacy Movement (GLS) must be implemented collaboratively by all components in schools and communities outside of school. Literacy developed is the basis for developing students' skills in answering the challenges of the 21st century.

#### Conclusion

Literacy is one of the realms in measuring the quality of education. One form of literacy that needs to be developed is creative culture and critical thinking in answering challenges in the 21st century. This can be expressed through literacy writing developed by SDIT Mutiara Hati as an effort to improve the quality of human resources since the elementary school level. Based on the results, continuous monitoring and learning outcomes, students can prove that literacy development can help critical and creative thought processes from primary school age. Literacy activities at SDIT Mutiara Hati Kota Malang are included in hots (Higher Order Thinking Skills) which is characterized by indicators that students can produce and reconstruct works through their environment contextually. This activity provides increased competitiveness of students in producing work in the educational realm. Despite the limitations experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, SDIT Mutiara Hati Kota Malang continues to strive to maximize online mentoring. This study recommends other studies to examine the effectiveness of the strategies used and expand the research methods that have been used by researchers.

Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education: Volume 4, Number 2, September 2020/1442

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Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education: Volume 4, Number 2, September 2020/1442