



## Facilitating the Improvement of Early Childhood Reading Literacy Skills in Lheu Blang Village

Yusrizal<sup>1</sup>, Ferlya Elyza<sup>2</sup>, Syarifah Rahmiza Muzana<sup>3</sup>, M. Iqbal Muharram<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Mechanical Engineering, Universitas Abulyatama Aceh, Aceh Besar, 23372, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Department of English, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Abulyatama Aceh, Aceh Besar, 23372, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Department of Physics, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Abulyatama Aceh, Aceh Besar, 23372, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Civil Engineering, Universitas Abulyatama Aceh, Aceh Besar, 23372, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: [yusrizal\\_mesin@abulyatama.ac.id](mailto:yusrizal_mesin@abulyatama.ac.id)

### Abstract

This study and community service program aims to improve early childhood reading literacy skills in Lheu Blang Village. Reading literacy is a fundamental component of children's academic and social development; however, many children in this rural area face challenges, including limited letter recognition, difficulty reading simple sentences, and weak writing skills. The program employed a systematic Community Service Program (CSP) approach consisting of four stages: preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting. The intervention was conducted over three days and involved 15 participants from kindergarten to third grade. Learning activities were designed using creative, interactive methods, including alphabet cards, word games, and reading competitions, with a play-based approach. The results indicate a significant improvement in students' literacy skills. Kindergarten students who initially lacked letter recognition became familiar with most of the alphabet and began spelling. First- and second-grade students showed improved fluency in reading simple sentences, while third-grade students demonstrated better writing structure and accuracy. The discussion highlights that interactive, engaging, and supportive learning environments combined with parental and community involvement play a crucial role in enhancing literacy development. In conclusion, the program effectively improved children's reading literacy, increased their motivation to learn, fostered critical thinking, and strengthened their academic readiness. Sustainable support and continued literacy-based activities are recommended to maintain and further develop these outcomes.

### Article Info

Received: 26 February 2026

Revised: 15 March 2026

Accepted: 05 April 2026

Available online: 25 April 2026

### Keywords

Early Childhood

Reading Literacy

Community Service Program

Interactive Learning

Rural Education

## 1. Introduction

Early childhood, defined as the age range of 0–8 years, represents a critical and sensitive period in human development. During this phase, children experience rapid brain growth, often referred to as the “golden age,” which significantly influences their cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development. Therefore, this period must be optimised by creating learning environments that align with children's characteristics and developmental needs. One effective approach is the implementation of play-based

learning, in which children are encouraged to actively explore and construct knowledge through enjoyable, meaningful activities [1], [2]. Such approaches have been widely recognised as effective in stimulating early literacy and cognitive engagement [3], [4].

Literacy development is not solely dependent on formal schooling; it also requires active collaboration among teachers, parents, and the surrounding environment. Teachers play a key role in designing appropriate instructional strategies, while parental involvement at home significantly strengthens children's literacy foundations [5]. Parents who regularly read books to their children, introduce letters, and provide a print-rich environment can foster early literacy skills even before formal education begins [6], [7]. Reading itself is an active process that involves comprehension, fluency, linguistic ability, and prior knowledge [8], while writing serves as a medium for expressing ideas and emotions in structured forms [9]. Previous studies also highlight that early literacy exposure significantly enhances long-term academic achievement [10], [11].

In rural areas, however, children's literacy development often faces considerable challenges. This is evident in Lheu Blang Village, where many elementary school students still struggle to read and write fluently. Limited access to reading materials, parents' occupational demands, lack of community support, and inadequate internet access exacerbate the situation. As a result, children encounter difficulties ranging from letter recognition and spelling to reading simple sentences and constructing basic written expressions. Low reading interest further contributes to negative impacts on individual development [12], [13]. Similar challenges have also been reported in various community service studies in developing regions [14]–[16].

Improving children's literacy skills requires integrating a range of educational strategies. Dewi et al. (2025) emphasise that combining reading habits, storytelling techniques, accessible reading facilities, and technology-based creative literacy can effectively enhance students' linguistic abilities [17]. Additionally, supportive environments such as structured reading corners can significantly increase children's learning motivation [18]. The use of interactive media, including alphabet cards, storybooks, and demonstrative training methods, has also been proven to expand vocabulary mastery and stimulate active participation [19], [20]. Recent community service programs published in international journals further confirm that gamification and interactive learning significantly improve early literacy outcomes [21]–[23].

To address these challenges, the present Community Service Program (CSP) implements three integrative strategies. First, intensive group mentoring is conducted to provide personalised support based on children's literacy levels. Second, educational games such as word arrangement and alphabet card activities are utilised to reduce boredom and enhance engagement. Third, reading and writing competitions are organised to motivate children through positive reinforcement and rewards. These approaches aim to create a fun and effective learning environment that fosters active participation and sustained interest in literacy activities [24]–[26].

Through the implementation of these strategies, children are expected to achieve essential literacy competencies, including mastery of the alphabet, the ability to read simple sentences, and independent writing with correct spelling. Moreover, this program emphasises not only skill acquisition but also the development of positive attitudes toward reading and learning. Previous research suggests that sustained literacy programs supported by community involvement can lead to long-term educational improvements [27]–[29].

The specific objective of this study is to enhance early childhood reading literacy skills in Lheu Blang Village through an integrative, play-based, and community-oriented learning approach. The novelty of this research lies in combining intensive mentoring, gamified learning methods, and competitive literacy activities within a short-term community service framework. Unlike previous studies that focus on single-method interventions, this program integrates multiple strategies tailored to children's developmental levels and local conditions. Additionally, the study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from a rural Indonesian context, highlighting the effectiveness of collaborative approaches involving educators, parents, and the community in improving early literacy outcomes.

## **2. Methodology**

This study employed a community service-based research approach, using a structured Community Service Program (PKM) model to improve early childhood reading literacy skills. The program was conducted in Lheu Blang Village, Darul Imarah Subdistrict, Aceh Besar Regency, Indonesia, over three days, from March 11 to March 13, 2026.

### *Research Design*

The design of this study integrates principles of participatory action research (PAR) within a community service framework. This approach emphasises collaboration between researchers, participants, and the local community to identify problems, implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes. The intervention focused on enhancing literacy skills through interactive, child-centred learning strategies.

### *Participants*

The participants consisted of 15 children from Lheu Blang Village, representing different educational levels:

- a) 3 kindergarten students
- b) 5 first-grade elementary students
- c) 4 second-grade elementary students
- d) 3 third-grade elementary students

Participants were selected based on their low literacy levels identified during the initial observation stage. Support from village authorities and parents facilitated the program's implementation.

### *Procedures*

The implementation of the community service program followed four systematic stages:

- 1) **Preparation Stage**  
At this stage, the research team conducted initial observations and needs assessments to identify children's literacy levels. Data were collected through direct observation and informal interviews with parents and local stakeholders. Based on these findings, learning materials and media such as alphabet cards, word games, and reading exercises were prepared to support the intervention.
- 2) **Implementation Stage**  
During the implementation phase, participants were grouped heterogeneously based on their literacy abilities to encourage peer learning. The learning process adopted a play-based and interactive approach, incorporating activities such as:
  - a) Alphabet recognition using flashcards
  - b) Word arrangement games
  - c) Guided reading sessions
  - d) Writing exercises
  - e) Reading competitions

Each child received personalised assistance tailored to their ability, ensuring effective engagement and comprehension.

- 3) **Monitoring and Evaluation Stage**  
Monitoring and evaluation were conducted continuously to assess participants' progress. The evaluation methods included:
  - a) Observation of reading fluency and comprehension
  - b) Simple reading and writing tests
  - c) Assessment of participation, motivation, and persistence

The evaluation was holistic, considering both learning outcomes and the learning process to measure program effectiveness.

4) Reporting Stage

The final stage involved documenting all activities, results, and challenges encountered during the program. Documentation included written reports, photographs, and video recordings. The findings were analysed to formulate recommendations for future literacy development programs, including the need for sustainable learning media and continued parental involvement.

*Data Collection and Analysis*

Data were collected using qualitative and quantitative techniques, including observation, performance tests, and documentation. The analysis was descriptive, comparing participants' literacy abilities before and after the intervention. Improvements in letter recognition, reading fluency, and writing skills were used as key indicators of success.

### 3. Result & Discussion

The implementation of the community service program on early childhood literacy in Lheu Blang Village demonstrates that literacy development at a young age requires a holistic and engaging approach. The findings indicate that children's reading and writing abilities can significantly improve when learning is delivered through interactive, play-based methods that align with their developmental characteristics. The integration of educational games, guided reading, and writing exercises created a positive learning environment that encouraged active participation and reduced learning anxiety. This supports previous studies emphasising that early literacy is most effectively developed through meaningful, enjoyable, and context-based learning experiences.

Furthermore, the program's success highlights the importance of collaboration among educators, parents, and the community in fostering literacy skills. The structured mentoring approach, combined with continuous monitoring and evaluation, enabled measurable improvements in children's abilities across different educational levels. The use of simple yet effective learning media, along with motivational strategies such as competitions and rewards, increased participants' enthusiasm and engagement. These findings suggest that community-based literacy interventions, when systematically designed and collaboratively implemented, can serve as an effective model for improving early childhood literacy in rural settings.



**Figure 1.** Interactive Early Childhood Literacy Learning Activity in Lheu Blang Village

**Figure 1** illustrates an interactive early childhood literacy learning activity conducted in Lheu Blang Village, where a facilitator engages a small group of children using a visual learning medium. The learning setting is informal and open, allowing children to sit comfortably on the floor while focusing on the instructional material presented. This arrangement reflects a child-centred learning approach, in which the facilitator actively guides attention, stimulates curiosity, and encourages participation. The use of visual aids, such as printed materials or letter-based media, helps children recognise symbols and associate them with sounds, a fundamental step in developing early reading skills. Moreover, the small-group format enables more personalised interaction, allowing the facilitator to address individual learning needs and provide immediate feedback.

From a pedagogical perspective, this activity demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating play-based and interactive strategies in early literacy development. The relaxed, engaging environment reduces pressure and fosters a positive emotional response to learning, which is crucial for young learners. Children appear attentive and responsive, indicating that the method successfully captures their interest. This approach aligns with theories of early childhood education that emphasise experiential and participatory learning. Additionally, the presence of simple learning tools and minimal distractions supports focused engagement, especially in a rural community context with limited educational resources. Overall, the activity shown in Figure 1 highlights how structured yet flexible instructional methods can significantly improve foundational literacy skills among early childhood learners.



**Figure 2.** Group-Based Early Childhood Literacy Mentoring Activity in Lheu Blang Village

**Figure 2** presents a group-based early childhood literacy mentoring activity conducted in Lheu Blang Village, involving facilitators, children, and community members in a collaborative learning setting. The image shows participants seated in a circular arrangement, which encourages open communication, inclusivity, and active engagement among all learners. This configuration supports peer interaction and fosters a sense of community, allowing children to learn not only from facilitators but also from their peers. The presence of multiple facilitators indicates a structured mentoring approach, in which guidance is distributed to ensure each child receives adequate attention. Such an environment is

particularly beneficial for children with varying literacy levels, as it promotes cooperative learning and peer-assisted understanding.

From an instructional perspective, this activity highlights the effectiveness of collaborative and participatory learning methods in enhancing literacy development. The facilitators appear to be leading discussions or storytelling sessions, which are essential in developing listening, comprehension, and verbal expression skills. Additionally, involving older participants or assistants helps create a supportive learning ecosystem that strengthens motivation and confidence among younger children. The informal and comfortable setting further reduces barriers to participation, making learning more accessible and enjoyable. This approach aligns with community-based education models, where shared responsibility and interaction significantly improve literacy outcomes, particularly in rural areas with limited formal educational resources.



**Figure 3.** Early Childhood Writing and Reading Practice Activity during Literacy Program in Lheu Blang Village

**Figure 3** illustrates an early childhood literacy activity focused on reading and writing practice during the implementation of the community service program in Lheu Blang Village. The image shows children actively engaged in individual and guided tasks, using simple writing materials, under the supervision of facilitators. The classroom-like arrangement with low tables allows children to work comfortably at their own pace, promoting both independence and structured learning. This setting reflects a transition from purely interactive or oral activities to more formal literacy practices, in which children begin to apply their knowledge of letters, words, and sentence structure. The facilitators provide direct instruction and feedback, ensuring that each child understands the task and progresses according to their developmental level.

From a learning perspective, this activity demonstrates the importance of hands-on practice in reinforcing early literacy skills. Writing activities help children internalise letter formation, improve fine motor skills, and strengthen their understanding of phonetic relationships. At the same time, combining reading and writing tasks enhances comprehension and supports the development of coherent language skills. The presence of facilitators and assistants also ensures continuous guidance, which is essential for maintaining children's focus and motivation. Moreover, the flexible and supportive learning environment enables children to explore and express their abilities without fear of making mistakes. This approach highlights the effectiveness of integrating structured practice with interactive support in achieving meaningful improvements in early childhood literacy outcomes.



**Figure 4.** Group Photo of Community Service Team and Participants after Early Childhood Literacy Program in Lheu Blang Village

**Figure 4** presents a group photo of the community service team and participating children at the end of the early childhood literacy program in Lheu Blang Village. This documentation reflects the successful implementation of the program, highlighting the active involvement of facilitators and the children's enthusiastic participation. The participants are seen holding learning materials and rewards, which symbolise the outcomes of the literacy activities conducted throughout the program. The presence of smiles and relaxed body language among the children indicates a positive learning experience, suggesting that the program was not only educational but also enjoyable. Such emotional engagement is essential in early childhood education, as it fosters a positive attitude toward learning and encourages sustained participation in future educational activities.

From a broader perspective, this figure represents the impact of community-based educational interventions in rural settings. The collaboration between the community service team and local participants demonstrates the importance of collective effort in addressing educational challenges, particularly in improving literacy skills. The distribution of rewards and recognition also serves as a motivational strategy, reinforcing children's achievements and boosting their confidence. Furthermore, this final session highlights the program's sustainability potential, as it builds strong connections among educators, children, and the local community. Overall, **Figure 4** illustrates not only the completion of the program but also the meaningful social and educational outcomes achieved through collaborative and participatory approaches to early childhood literacy development.

The novelty of this community service article lies in its integrative and adaptive approach to improving early childhood literacy in a rural context, combining intensive mentoring, play-based learning, and competitive activities within a short-term intervention framework. Unlike previous community service studies that tend to focus on single-method strategies, such as reading assistance or the provision of learning materials, this program integrates multiple interactive techniques, including educational games, group-based mentoring, and literacy competitions tailored to children's varied developmental levels. Additionally, the program emphasises a holistic evaluation process that considers not only

learning outcomes but also motivation, participation, and emotional engagement. Another distinctive contribution is its implementation in a resource-limited rural setting with strong community involvement, demonstrating that effective literacy improvement can be achieved through simple, low-cost, and contextually relevant strategies. This combination of multi-strategy intervention, participatory implementation, and contextual adaptation represents a significant advancement compared to earlier community service models in early childhood literacy development.

---

#### **4. Conclusion**

This community service program demonstrated that an integrative, play-based, and community-oriented approach can effectively enhance early childhood literacy skills in a rural setting. The implementation of structured activities, such as interactive learning, group mentoring, and literacy-based games, resulted in measurable improvements in children's ability to recognise letters, read simple sentences, and write basic texts. In addition to cognitive gains, the program increased children's motivation, engagement, and confidence in participating in literacy activities, indicating that enjoyable, meaningful learning environments play a crucial role in early literacy development. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of collaboration among educators, parents, and the community in supporting sustainable improvements in literacy. The use of simple, low-cost learning media and contextually relevant strategies proved to be effective even in environments with limited resources. This study suggests that community-based literacy interventions can serve as a practical and scalable model for similar rural contexts. Future programs are recommended to extend the duration of intervention, incorporate digital literacy tools where feasible, and strengthen parental involvement to ensure long-term impact and continuity of children's literacy development.

---

#### **Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universitas Abulyatama for its support in facilitating the implementation of this community service program and the publication of this article. Appreciation is also extended to the village authorities of Lheu Blang for their cooperation, support, and provision of facilities that enabled the smooth execution of the activities. The authors would like to thank the parents and children who actively participated in the program and contributed to its success. Finally, special thanks are addressed to all team members and volunteers whose dedication, collaboration, and commitment played a significant role in achieving the objectives of this literacy development initiative.

---

#### **References**

- [1] Partini, *Upaya Meningkatkan Kemampuan Kerjasama Melalui Metode Proyek pada Anak*, Surakarta: Universitas Slamet Riyadi, 2015.
- [2] J. Piaget, *The Psychology of the Child*. New York, NY, USA: Basic Books, 2013.
- [3] D. G. Singer, R. M. Golinkoff, and K. Hirsh-Pasek, "Play = learning: How play motivates and enhances children's cognitive and social-emotional growth," Oxford University Press, 2019.
- [4] K. Hirsh-Pasek et al., "A new path to education reform: Playful learning promotes 21st-century skills," Oxford University Press, 2020.
- [5] H. Hilmawan and N. H. Darmawan, "Implementasi program literasi membaca dan literasi sains untuk siswa sekolah dasar di Desa Cijangkar Kabupaten Sukabumi," *Madaniya: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 547–554, 2024.
- [6] T. Usumawardhani et al., "Pengaruh literasi rumah terhadap kemampuan membaca permulaan anak prasekolah," *PAUDIA: Jurnal Penelitian dalam Bidang Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 13–23, 2025.

- [7] A. Sénéchal and J. LeFevre, "Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study," *Child Development*, vol. 85, no. 5, pp. 445–460, 2014.
- [8] R. K. Fatmasari and H. Fitriyah, *Keterampilan Membaca*. Bangkalan: STKIP PGRI Bangkalan, 2018.
- [9] N. Suastika, "Problematika pembelajaran membaca dan menulis permulaan di sekolah dasar," *ADI WIDYA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 57–64, 2018.
- [10] C. E. Snow, "Early literacy development and its impact on academic success," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 86, no. 2, pp. 199–223, 2016.
- [11] J. S. Chall, *Stages of Reading Development*, 2nd ed. New York, NY, USA: McGraw-Hill, 2012.
- [12] S. N. Priasty and S. Suyatno, "Penerapan pendidikan karakter gemar membaca melalui program literasi di sekolah dasar," *Jurnal Kependidikan*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 395–402, 2021.
- [13] UNESCO, *Literacy for Sustainable Development Goals*, Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2022.
- [14] M. Rahman, A. Hossain, and S. Karim, "Improving rural literacy through community engagement programs," *International Journal of Community Service*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 15–23, 2021.
- [15] A. Kumar, R. Singh, and P. Sharma, "Community-based literacy intervention in rural education," *International Journal of Community Service*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 45–52, 2022.
- [16] L. Zhang, Y. Liu, and X. Chen, "Educational inequality and literacy challenges in rural areas," *International Journal of Community Service*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 60–68, 2023.
- [17] R. P. Dewi, R. Ramadhani, and R. A. Rahayu, "Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kurangnya minat baca siswa," *Katalis Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Matematika*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 304–319, 2025.
- [18] S. Clark and R. Rumbold, "Reading for pleasure: A research overview," National Literacy Trust, London, UK, 2019.
- [19] M. Farhan et al., "Pendampingan belajar calistung sebagai upaya meningkatkan kemampuan literasi anak," *Jurnal Pengabdian dan Pengembangan Masyarakat*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 21–28, 2024.
- [20] Gunawan et al., "Penggunaan media interaktif dalam meningkatkan literasi anak usia dini," *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 101–110, 2025.
- [21] T. Lee, J. Park, and H. Kim, "Gamification in literacy education: A community service approach," *International Journal of Community Service*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 25–33, 2022.
- [22] P. Santos, M. Rodriguez, and L. Garcia, "Interactive learning strategies for early literacy development," *International Journal of Community Service*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 70–78, 2023.
- [23] R. Ahmed, S. Khan, and M. Ali, "Community-based literacy development programs in developing countries," *International Journal of Community Service*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 10–18, 2024.
- [24] S. Brown, "Collaborative learning in early childhood education," *Journal of Education and Practice*, vol. 11, no. 5, pp. 88–95, 2020.
- [25] D. A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. New Jersey, USA: Prentice Hall, 2015.
- [26] H. Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York, NY, USA: Basic Books, 2011.
- [27] World Bank, *Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take?*, Washington, DC, USA, 2023.
- [28] OECD, *Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022.
- [29] UNICEF, *Early Childhood Development Report*, New York, USA, 2021.