

Nurturing Literacy Development for Early Education in Papua

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Abstract: Papua is home to numerous local cultures and languages. Early literacy programs help preserve and promote these cultural heritages, ensuring they are passed down to future generations. Early literacy promotes social inclusion by enabling children to participate fully in their communities, family, schools, and society at large. It fosters a sense of belonging and equal participation for all, irrespective of linguistic or cultural backgrounds. The paper explores through related references on the multidimensional background of literacy initiatives and challenges in the Papua region. It offers a concise preview of the subject matter, emphasizing the significance of literacy as a critical factor in social and educational progress. It invites readers to explore into the complexities and dynamics of literacy development efforts within Papua, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the region's educational aspirations and potential pathways for improvement. A significant discovery concerning regional statistical data indicates a clear correlation between areas or districts with a high illiteracy rate and those experiencing elevated levels of poverty. Suggestion for urgent further investigation is required to address future literacy improvement in these specific regions within Papua.

Keywords: Literacy, Early Education

Abstrak: Papua memiliki beragam kekayaan budaya dan bahasa lokal. Program literasi awal mempunyai peran yang krusial dalam melestarikan dan mempromosikan warisan budaya ini, serta memastikan agar pengetahuan tersebut dapat diwariskan kepada generasi yang akan datang. Literasi awal mendukung inklusi sosial dengan memberikan kesempatan kepada anak-anak untuk terlibat sepenuhnya dalam komunitas, keluarga, sekolah, dan masyarakat secara keseluruhan. Hal ini tentu saja berkontribusi dalam menciptakan persatuan dan partisipasi yang setara bagi semua individu, tanpa memandang latar belakang linguistik atau budaya yang mereka miliki. Paper ini menggali latar belakang yang kompleks dari upaya pengembangan literasi dan tantangan yang dihadapi di wilayah Papua berdasarkan sumber-sumber yang relevan. Disamping itu juga memberikan ringkasan singkat mengenai isu pokok yang menekankan betapa pentingnya literasi bagi kemajuan sosial dan pendidikan. Hal ini mendorong pembaca untuk lebih mendalami kompleksitas dan dinamika upaya pengembangan literasi di Papua, yang pada akhirnya akan meningkatkan pemahaman kita tentang aspirasi pendidikan di wilayah ini dan kemungkinan langkah-langkah perbaikan yang dapat diambil. Temuan signifikan yang berkaitan dengan data statistik regional menunjukkan adanya korelasi yang jelas antara daerah-daerah yang tingkat buta huruf tinggi dengan

daerah-daerah yang tingkat kemiskinannya tinggi. Oleh karena itu, disarankan adanya urgensi penelitian lebih lanjut kedepan tentang pengembangan literasi yang difokuskan di daerah-daerah tersebut di Papua.

Kata Kunci : Literasi, Pendidikan Usia Dini

A. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government has a grand vision of enhancing Indonesia's human resources to compete on a global scale. With the aim of achieving the 'golden generation' by 2045, marking Indonesia's 100 years of independence, and realizing a just and prosperous society as outlined in the 1945 Constitution, the government considers this vision to be of paramount importance (Khairunnisa, 2016). Furthermore, Khairunnisa underscores that a significant factor affecting the progress of Indonesia's human resources is the "limited awareness of national literacy. This has led to a decline in national competitiveness in an increasingly fierce global environment. The main cause of this decline is the inadequate grasp of knowledge and technology due to insufficient reading and writing skills. UNESCO statistics from 2012 highlight Indonesia's exceptionally low reading culture, with a reading interest index as low as 0.001%, indicating that only 1 person out of 1000 expresses an interest in reading. Similarly, data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranks Indonesia's education system 69th out of 79 countries.

In addition, the persistent issue of low literacy rates among Indonesia's younger generation, dating back to the earliest PISA Test in 2000, has gained significant attention (Yembise, 2020). Yembise further highlights that the government, under the Ministry of Education and Culture, took proactive measures by initiating the National Literacy Movement in 2015, followed by the School Literacy Movement in 2016, and subsequently the Family Literacy Movement and Community Literacy Movement in 2017. These initiatives reflect the strenuous efforts made by policymakers to enhance the literacy skills of Indonesian students. Among these policies, particular emphasis has been placed on family roles, widely recognized as a crucial element in the education of children. The family unit serves as both the closest and initial learning environment for a child. Parents not only serve as primary facilitators of informal education for their children but also employ significant influence as determinants of children's success in formal education.

The constitution in this country guarantees every child, without exception, has the right to education. The Child Protection Law, Article 9, paragraph 1 states that 1) Every child has the right to receive education and teaching for the purpose of personal development and intelligence level in accordance with their interests and talents, 2). In addition to the rights of children as mentioned in paragraph (1), specifically for children with disabilities, they also have the right to receive special education, while children with exceptional abilities also have the right to receive special education. Article 48 mandates the government to provide 9 (nine) years of education for every child. Therefore, there must be a strategy to address this issue that everyone should have equal access to education in accordance with SDGs (Picture 1).

Picture 1. Quality of Education of SDGs



Picture 1 describes the quality of education has become one of the important targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were globally launched by all the Heads of State/Nations worldwide in September 2015. The quality of education is one of the main targets in the SDGs that must be achieved holistically by all countries in the world under the United Nations. The global goals that must be achieved is that by the year 2030, every country, including Indonesia, has achieved a full quality education. One of the targets to be achieved is that every child has received education without exception.

In relation to the aforementioned, basic education starts with learning to read and write. Do Papuan children have the opportunity to fully enjoy their right to education in this country? In Papua, Eastern part of Indonesia, it's really important to help young children become good at reading and writing. This way, they can face and answer the special problems which in turn lead to make a better educational change. The province of Papua is recorded to have the lowest illiteracy rate. According to Pahabol (Pademme, 2022), a member of parliament from Papua, the illiteracy rate in Papua is as high as 21.9 percent, which means that more than 900 thousand residents of Papua are still considered illiterate. This is because as of 2021, the population of Papua, based on BPS data, is over 4.335 million. Pahabol urges all parties to collaborate in reducing the high illiteracy rates in Papua.

The culture of the Papuan people traditionally good at speaking, counting, and remembering. The culture of writing and reading came gradually as a part of the journey of educational development in this region. Therefore, the provision of education is entirely the responsibility of local leaders, namely governors, regents, and mayors. Moreover, now that the Special Autonomy budget for Papua is mostly allocated to districts and cities, this budget can be used to combat illiteracy in each region. "The foundation (of basic education) is what needs to be prioritized. If the foundation is not strong, it's challenging. People may want to pursue higher education, but if education at the grassroots level, or in villages, is not improved, it's difficult," Pahabol said (Pademme, 2022).

Jumeri added that there are 6 regions where the population still has the highest illiteracy rates. These areas are Papua, West Kalimantan, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), South Sulawesi (Sulsel), and West Sulawesi (Sulbar). "We still have 6 provinces that we need to seriously address, including Papua, where the illiteracy rate is still 21.9 percent, followed by West Nusa Tenggara at 7.46 percent, NTT at 4.24 percent, South Sulawesi at 4.22 percent, West Sulawesi at 3.98 percent, and West Kalimantan at 3.81 percent," said Jumeri (Pademme, 2022; Laily, 2020). In this regard, Papua holds the highest ranking with a staggering 21.9 percent, which translates to 657 thousand out of 3.7 million Papuan residents unable to read. According to Jumeri, the Director General for Early Childhood, Basic, and Secondary Education (PAUD Dikdasmen) at the Ministry of Education and Culture, the illiteracy rate in Papua reached 22 percent in the year 2020. Illiteracy in Papua is not a new issue; rather, it's a longstanding, typical problem that has persisted over time (Laily, 2020).

Literacy is a crucial skill that every child should possess in order to learn and access various information. However, in Papua, the literacy skills among children are significantly lagging behind their peers in the rest of the country. In fact, literacy activities in Papua are the lowest among all provinces in Indonesia (Sinombor, 2023). The challenges of promoting a culture of reading books and writing in the regions of Papua and West Papua are even more overwhelming and complex. These challenges stem from the isolated geographical locations, a shortage of teachers, and inadequate educational facilities, including a lack of suitable textbooks to meet the needs of students in schools (Muhsidin, 2020).

Drawing from the preceding explanation supported with valid sources and the challenges faced in promoting literacy development in Papua, this paper examines into the concept of literacy and its challenges and application in Papua. It further explores the fundamental importance of reading and writing in nurturing a promising generation from the early stages of education in Papua. Finally, it introduces the idea of fostering a conducive literacy environment, encompassing both family and school settings, to ensure that every child in the region attains proficient reading and writing skills.

B. MEANING OF LITERACY

Being literate means knowing how to read, write, and understand what's written in a certain language. It's more than just reading and writing – it helps you understand information, share thoughts, and take part in different parts of society. Literacy also includes understanding, thinking carefully, and using information in important ways. The concept of literacy is connected to the capability of reading and writing well enough to solve problems, learn new information, and find joy in writing words (Brewer, 2007). Furthermore, literacy is also defined as the ability to understand and use written language that is needed for society and valuable for individuals (Hayat & Suhendra, 2010). Essentially, in simple terms, literacy is defined as the ability to read and write.

Kern (2000:16) provided a comprehensive explanation that "Literacy involves employing practices tied to the social, historical, and cultural context to make and understand meanings from written materials." This includes having at least a subconscious understanding of how writing rules relate to where they're used, and ideally, being able to think carefully about those connections. Because it's adapted to different purposes, literacy is always changing and dynamic, not static, and it differs among different groups of people and cultures. It uses various thinking skills, knowledge of spoken and written language, familiarity with different writing styles, and cultural

understanding. Basic literacy for young children means helping them learn the basics of reading and writing. This includes recognizing letters, understanding how they make words, and being able to sound out simple words. It also involves developing the ability to understand the meaning of what they read and express themselves through writing or drawing. This foundation sets them up for more advanced reading and writing skills as they grow.

Literacy is the use of social, historical, and cultural practices in creating and interpreting meaning through text. Literacy requires, at the very least, an unspoken sensitivity to the relationships between textual conventions and their contextual use, and ideally, the ability to critically reflect on these relationships. Literacy involves a range of cognitive abilities, knowledge of written and oral language, knowledge of genres, and cultural awareness (Khairunnisa, 2016). Thus, simply say, literacy involves the ability to read and write effectively, allowing individuals to understand, interpret, and create written content. It's a vital skill that profoundly influences personal growth, education, and engagement within society. Literacy forms the core of academic achievements, job prospects, and active involvement in civic and social spheres. It stands as a cornerstone for personal empowerment, continuous learning, and economic progress within communities and nations. Across the globe, educational systems place a strong emphasis on enhancing literacy because it's pivotal in equipping individuals with the essential capabilities needed to thrive in our information-driven world.

C. BASIC LITERACY FOR PAPUAN CHILDREN

In essence, literacy acts as a gateway to a vast world of knowledge, providing children in Papua with the tools to understand their culture, history, and the broader global context. It equips them to be informed, curious, and engaged citizens, both within their communities and on a larger scale. With literacy, children can access texts that document their own cultural heritage, traditions, and stories. They can learn about their ancestors, customs, and the values that define their community. This knowledge helps them feel a stronger connection to their roots and preserves their cultural identity. Literacy allows children to explore historical accounts and records, both local and global. They can inquire into the history of their region, understanding how it has evolved over time. This knowledge of the past provides context for their present lives and fosters a sense of historical consciousness. Through reading, children can discover information about other parts of the world, different cultures, and diverse ways of life. This exposure broadens their horizons and encourages them to think beyond their immediate surroundings. They gain a better understanding of the global community and their place within it.

Reading exposes children to a wide range of ideas, experiences, and emotions. They can relate to characters in stories, empathize with different situations, and gain insights into human behaviour. This exposure contributes to their emotional intelligence and personal development. Literacy is a cornerstone of education. Children who can read and comprehend written materials are better equipped in school. They can understand textbooks, complete assignments, and engage in meaningful classroom discussions. The ability to access written information fosters a love for learning. Children can continue exploring topics of interest beyond their formal education, nurturing a habit of continuous learning throughout their lives.

The ability to read is determined by the development of language, while the ability to write is determined by the development of psychometric skills. Language is the primary tool of communication for individuals to express various desires and needs. Language refers to the signs, symbols and conventions which is given community learns in order to construct meaning. Children with good language skills generally have the ability to express thoughts, feelings, and interactive actions with their environment. Writing ability is an expression of spoken language or handwritings. Early writing activities begin when a child pretends to write on paper, sand, or other media in the form of handwritings until the child can imitate actual writing forms.

Basic education for young children in Papua involves providing them with fundamental learning experiences. This includes teaching them essential skills like reading, writing, and basic math. Additionally, it involves introducing them to important concepts about the world around them, fostering creativity through art and play, and helping them develop social skills and a love for learning. Since Papua faces unique challenges, basic education aims to address local needs and contribute to the overall growth and well-being of these children. Practical literacy in the real world pertains to achieving broader educational objectives that are closely linked to essential skills required for real-life situations. These skills encompass problem-solving, taking initiative, assuming responsibility, upholding integrity, and more. When parents actively participate in their children's real-life literacy programs, they effectively serve as facilitators for inspiring and propelling their children to put in greater effort. Consequently, this heightened motivation prompts children to strive harder, leading to improved academic and non-academic accomplishments (Amini, 2016).

Real life literacy is more about achieving in extended goals of education which are connected to competencies needed for the real life. The competencies may include problem solving, initiatives, responsibility, integrity, etc. When parents are involved in educating their children in the real-life literacy program, they actually play a role to encourage and motivate their children to work harder, so that it makes them more motivated, work harder and achieve better academically and non-academically (Amini, 2016).

D. CREATING A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT IN PAPUA

1. Family Environment

Experts in education and child development unanimously agree that the family is the first institution that exerts significant influence on a child's future development. Consequently, the role of the family is of utmost significance in facilitating a child's growth. The enormity of the family environment's role, as expressed by Buchori (2005), is such that the family wields an overwhelmingly dominant influence in fostering a child's literacy. Real-world literacy primarily involves attaining educational objectives linked to essential skills required for real-life situations. These skills encompass problem-solving, taking initiative, assuming responsibility, and maintaining integrity. When parents actively participate in their children's real-world literacy education, they serve as facilitators, encouraging and inspiring their offspring to exert more effort. This, in turn, fosters increased motivation and improved performance, both academically and in various aspects of life (Amini, 2016 cited in Yembise, 2020).

Children commence their excursion of learning to read and write from their parents at home. Kweldju (1997) asserts that from the very early stages of language development, children engage in communication and meaning-building with their parents, caregivers, or others around them. In Papua, creating a conducive environment for literacy in Papua, requires a multidimensional approach that takes into account the unique cultural and geographical challenges of the region. Papua is known for its linguistic diversity, remote communities, and limited access to educational resources. This huge challenges have great impact on the literacy and illiteracy as shown in Table 1 below.

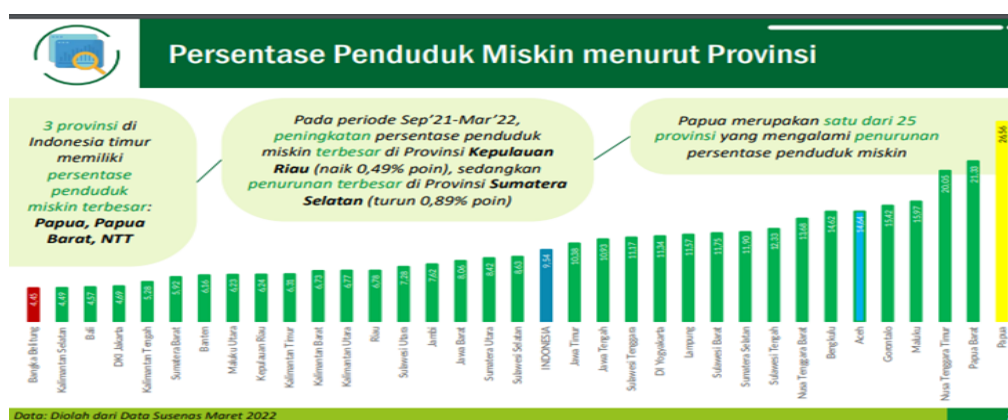
Table 1

Literacy Rate and Illiteracy Rate (BPS, 2020 aged 15-44) by Districts in Papua.

No	Districts/Regencies	Literacy Rate	Illiteracy Rate
1	Jayawijaya	73,03	26,97
2	Paniai	64,47	35,53
3	Tolikara	63, 66	36, 34
4	Intan Jaya	60,57	39,43
5	Puncak Jaya	59,96	40.04
6	Mamberamo Tengah	58,67	41.33
7	Deyai	56,23	43,77
8	Dogiyai	51,00	49.00
9	Nduga	46,45	53,55
10	Lanny Jaya	35,34	64,66

Table 1 reveals the regions with an average literacy rate of 60 or below, such as Intan Jaya, Puncak Jaya, Mamberamo Tengah, Deyai, Dogiyai, Nduga, and Lanny Jaya, are included in the list of underprivileged regions (Graph 1). The relatively high illiteracy rates (aged 15-44) indicate implicitly that the level of children literacy in these areas is presumably disgruntled. When examining most of the locations outlined in Table 1, it becomes evident that there is a notable correlation with the poverty rate within this province, as illustrated in Graphic 1, wherein the mentioned locations are linked to those listed in Table 1.

Grafik 1. Percentage of Poor Population by Province (BPS, 2022)



According to the Official Statistical News Release by BPS Papua Province (BPS, 2022), it is stated that Papua and West Papua provinces occupy the highest ranking in terms of poverty levels compared to other provinces in Indonesia. Graphic 1 reveals that compared to West Papua Province, Papua Province has the highest number of underdeveloped areas, namely Jayawijaya, Nabire, Paniai, Puncak Jaya, Boven Digoel, Mappi, Asmat, Yahukimo, Pegunungan Bintang, Tolikara, Keerom, Waropen, Supiore, Mamberamo Raya, Nduga, Lanny Jaya, Mamberamo Tengah, Yalimo, Puncak, Dogiyai, Intan Jaya, and Deiyai. These twenty-one districts mentioned above have numerous sub-districts and villages with diverse backgrounds in various aspects of community life. These places are considered to be underprivileged districts which need interventions from the government, private sector, traditional leaders, religious leaders, educators, and the entire community including parents to build a collective movement to improve literacy in Papua.

Supporting underprivileged districts aforementioned in Papua, or any similar underserved community, to develop a successful literacy program for early education requires a thoughtful and comprehensive approach. Assessment and Need Analysis are needed as preliminary survey to grasp the specific needs and challenges of these districts by interviewing, and engaging with the local community to identify the key issues related to early education and literacy in broader terms. Then, collaborate with local government agencies, NGOs, community leaders, and educators by forming partnerships to provide valuable insights and resources. Based on the results of the data, together with all the collaborative groups, develop a clear vision for the literacy program, including goals, objectives, and key performance indicators that can measure its success over time.

Develop a culturally relevant and age-appropriate curriculum is essential factor. It aligns with the local context by considering the specific needs, languages, and cultural touches of the community. To support the implementation of the program, funding and resources are totally required. This could involve seeking grants, donations, or government support to cover resources for books, educational materials, teaching facilities and infrastructures including digital technologies. Moreover, invest in training programs as continues professional development for teachers and educators in the district is considered vital factor by focussing on teaching methods that promote literacy and early childhood development.

Remember that building a successful literacy program in underdeveloped districts are multifarious processes. It requires patience, commitment, and the involvement of the entire community. Regularly assess the program's impact and adapt strategies as needed to achieve long-term success in improving early education and literacy rates. Importantly, in engaging parents and the community on the education process by conducting workshops and awareness programs to emphasize the importance of early education and literacy. Thus, parents' roles in the underprivileged areas have significant influences on literacy development at home. Children understanding for reading tends to develop when they observe their parents or other family members frequently engaging in reading books, newspapers, or magazines at home. Remarkably, children can be encouraged to embrace reading even before they are born, with pregnant women who regularly read being more likely to give birth to children who later develop

a passion for reading. Literacy education can be started from early childhood with the habit of reading story books and fairy tales to children regularly (Septiani & Kurniawati, 2021). Australians' children are accustomed to the habits of mother read stories before bedtime which is called "bedtime story". Parents in Papua can adopt this approach as way to introduce literacy at the beginning to their children.

Parents play a crucial role in teaching literacy to their children at home in Papua. Parents' involvement in child's literacy is stronger than other factors such as social class and educational background. (Flouri & Burchamans, 2004 cited in Fatonah, 2022). There are factors that influence child's development of literacy in Papua. Firstly, recognize the linguistic diversity in Papua, a bilingual approach might incorporate both the local languages and Bahasa Indonesia as a solution to improve literacy program in Papua. This approach respects cultural diversity and helps children become proficient in both languages. As stated by Brooker (2011 cited in Fatonah, 2022) highlight that in doing research on child's education, cultural factor must be taken seriously as an important variable. Secondly, read aloud to their children is one of the most effective ways to promote literacy, starting from an early age and continue as they grow.

Parents are required to choose a variety of books, including picture books, chapter books, and stories in different genres. Encourage storytelling and oral narratives in both languages. Share family stories, legends, and traditional tales to pass down cultural heritage. Moreover, finding books and reading materials in both the local language and Bahasa Indonesia are in need of expansion. It is indispensable supporting academicians, local authors and publishers that produce books relevant to Papua's culture and context. Establish a small library corner at home with books in both languages such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and magazines can allow children to choose books that interest them and encourage them to explore. By integrating these strategies into your daily routines and adapting them to the local context in Papua, you can contribute significantly to your child's literacy development while preserving and celebrating the region's rich cultural heritage.

Additionally, Burns (1996) proposes that everything a child naturally learns about language within the family environment serves as the basis for their reading and writing skills in the classroom. Concerning the acquisition of writing abilities, early experiences with written language can commence as early as the child's first year of life, which may involve activities like playing with alphabet blocks and listening to stories being read aloud, thus establishing the foundation for the process of learning to read and write (Tiale and Sulzby, 1989 cited in Candrawaty, 2016). Another important aspect in eliminating illiteracy is to enhance the literacy of students so that they possess the abilities and skills to read, write, speak, calculate, and solve everyday life problems. Literacy is used to create a more literate society with broader insights and sustainable skills. Therefore, various efforts must be made to maximize the development of the education sector in Papua, and the most crucial endeavour in eliminating illiteracy is by increasing awareness among all families that reading should start within the family (Laily, 2023).

2. School Environment

If the family environment has fulfilled its role to the fullest extent in helping prepare children to have motivation and a love for reading and writing activities, it can be predicted that these children will show excellent progress when they enter more formal education. Therefore, what parents have instilled in their children at home must be fully supported by teachers at school as the initial step when a child enters the readiness period for reading. According to Burns (1996) the readiness period for reading emerges before formal reading instruction, typically from kindergarten to early grade 1. This is where the school's role becomes strategically important in preparing children during the readiness period for reading.

Promoting literacy in schools in Papua, Indonesia, involves addressing the unique linguistic and cultural diversity of the region. Firstly, implement a bilingual education approach that includes both the local languages and Bahasa Indonesia. The conflict between Bahasa Indonesia as a compulsory educational language and diverse vernacular languages in West Papua also contributes to the low literacy skill (Yawan, 2020). Using Bahasa Indonesia as a medium of instruction is assumed to be a constraint to the educational development in the society (Yembise, 2007). This seems to support the notion that the multiplicity of languages in the classroom is a barrier to the teaching and learning process. Secondly, develop a curriculum that reflects Papua's rich cultural heritage in which incorporate local stories, legends, and traditions into reading materials to make learning more engaging and applicable for students. Thirdly, to include books and reading materials in both local languages and Bahasa Indonesia are desirable to encourage Papuan students to read texts that showcase the diversity of their cultures outside their boundary.

Moreover, provide teachers with specialized training in teaching literacy in multilingual settings and equip them with approaches, methods and techniques for effectively teaching students with diverse cultural/linguistic background. Nonetheless, according to Yembise (1997; 2007), a problem exists concerning the presence of educators in disadvantaged regions. In these areas, teachers often show a preference for urban living rather than dedicating most of their time to remote and isolated locations. In certain remote schools, some teachers receive their incentives and salaries only once every three months, or even just once a year. This issue stems from challenges related to transportation in vast geographical areas. Moreover, barriers such as segregation, limited services, and unfamiliarity with local languages and customs hinder the recruitment of teachers.

Moreover, engage Papuan parents and the local community and schools in promoting literacy by encouraging parents to read with their children at home and involve the community in literacy-related events and programs. Ensure that schools have the necessary infrastructure for effective literacy instruction, including classrooms, seating arrangements, and well-lit spaces for reading. One of the reasons for the illiteracy cases is the low quality of education in Papua, particularly in terms of infrastructure and facilities, which still need significant improvement to support the teaching and learning activities in schools and serve as effective learning resources. The high illiteracy rate in the province of Papua is attributed to several factors. One of the reasons for the illiteracy cases is the low quality of education in Papua, particularly in terms of infrastructure and facilities, which still need significant improvement to support the teaching and learning activities in schools and serve as effective learning resources (Laily, 2023).

Literacy experts in advanced countries argue that reading is not just about sounding out letters but also about giving meaning to the text (Goodman, 1987; Aisyah and Arismanti, 1990 cited in Chandrawaty, 2016). This means that when children read, they also think about the content of what they are reading. The implications of this perspective from literacy experts in advanced countries can be seen in lower-grade classrooms and preschool education, for example, in Europe, America, and Australia. One of these activities is reading stories to children. Reading aloud is believed to develop language skills and teach reading and writing. This is commonly done using a "Big Book," which is a specially designed storybook with large and engaging illustrations, repeated words, a predictable plot, and rhythmic text patterns suitable for shared reading activities between teachers and students (shared reading). According to Aaisyah and Arismanti (1990 cited in Candrawaty, 2016), these books have special characteristics such as vibrant and attractive illustrations, repetitive words, predictable plots, and rhythmic text patterns that can be sung.

Remember that promoting literacy is a multidimensional effort that requires collaboration between schools, communities, and various stakeholders. Adapting literacy programs to the specific needs and cultural context of children in Papua is crucial for their success. Creating a text-rich classroom environment can motivate teachers to make children aware of the goals of reading and writing. Written materials can be obtained from interesting books and written resources in the play centre, thus inviting children to read and write. Similarly, printed materials or text in the child's surroundings, such as advertising materials and family promotions in the home or community, can be connected to the child's lessons at school. The advantage of children's knowledge of words in their surroundings is that teachers can start teaching letters or sounds.

In a developing classroom environment, the setting should provide opportunities for language growth similar to what is found in the natural home environment (Holdaway, 1979 cited in Chandrawaty, 2016). Some guidelines based on this concept are as follows: 1) Provide a variety of materials or resources for both reading and purposeful writing; 2) Place labels with key words around the room at the children's eye level; 3) Arrange the room so that children can participate in classroom activities and take ownership of the space; 4) Display students' work so that they can see and discuss it with their peers (in one room, boards and bulletin boards are at the child's level); 5) Use reading materials that are related to ongoing classroom activities. Moreover, teachers who provide students with experiences through integrated learning in a literate environment can enhance learning because children use interconnected processes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening for authentic communication.

A print-rich environment that provides opportunities for using it will encourage children to experiment with literacy. Children read and write as a new way to communicate something different from spoken language. They observe the print environment (print sources) and "play" with reading and writing. In this way, they feel that literacy is a natural part of their development. Similarly, teachers who can help students rediscover the emergence of literacy skills within a meaningful context (Graves, 2010 cited in Chandrawaty, 2016). The classroom environment will be a determinant of a child's positive development potential. Creating an emergent literacy classroom space is a learning effort for children. According to Kenneth Goodman (1986 cited in Burns 1996), all activities consistently guide children towards reading and writing. Teachers should accept children as they are, understand their specific abilities and needs, find ways to serve them, and encourage them with patience and enthusiasm.

D. CONCLUSION

Challenges faced in promoting literacy development in Papua is still an ongoing debatable disputes. The concept of literacy and its application in Papua was explored; importance of reading and writing in nurturing a promising generation from the early stages of education and introduces the idea of fostering a conducive literacy environment, encompassing both family and school settings, to ensure that every child in the region attains proficient reading and writing skills in Papua. From the statistical data, it revealed that there are underprivileged areas/districts in Papua which are in need of huge attention for future literacy development to reduce the illiteracy rate. Thus, fostering literacy development for early education in Papua requires innovative approaches that embrace linguistic diversity, engage communities, and influence technology. Despite challenges rooted in culture, geography, and resource scarcity, the strategies outlined in this paper offer a path forward. By prioritizing bilingual literacy programs, culturally relevant content, community engagement, technological solutions, and educator training, Papua can lay the foundation for a generation of confident, literate individuals who will contribute to the region's growth, development, and cultural preservation.

Indonesia must prepare literate generations, so it is time to instil a culture of reading and writing early on based on various scientific studies. It is known that children's literacy skills are still low and lag behind advanced countries. Therefore, the literacy movement should start from the family environment because the role of the family is dominant in preparing literate generations to compete globally. After the family, the next phase is when children enter more formal education, such as kindergarten, which must be connected to the learning program. This phase is referred to as the "reading readiness period." Educators must be careful in instilling literacy learning. Educators should continue to guide all designed learning towards a play-based and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Early literacy skills serve as the foundation for a child's future academic success and lifelong learning. In Papua, a region known for its rich variety of cultures and languages, early literacy assumes even greater significance.

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