

The Implementation of Morning Journals as a Teacher's Strategy in Improving Early Childhood Literacy

Moh.Taufiq^{1*}, Nurifah²

Abstract

This study aims to describe teacher strategies in stimulating early childhood literacy through morning journal habituation activities at KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban. Literacy is one of the basic competencies that need to be developed from an early age as a foundation for academic abilities at the next level. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that morning journal habituation can stimulate children's literacy skills in the aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Teachers act as facilitators by creating a pleasant learning atmosphere, providing examples, and guiding children to write and draw based on daily experiences. Morning journal habituation also fosters discipline, self-confidence, and children's ability to express ideas. Thus, morning journal activities are effective as a strategy to improve early childhood literacy that is contextual and enjoyable.

Keywords: literacy; childhood; stimulation; strategy; morning journal; teacher

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¹Institut Al Fithrah Surabaya, Indonesia

²KBTK Insan Kamil, Tuban, Indonesia

*Author Correspondent: lmoh.taufiq@alfithrah.ac.id

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is the primary foundation for developing a child's character, intelligence, and future life skills. At this level, children are in a golden age, where all potential develops very rapidly. Therefore, the role of educators is crucial in providing appropriate stimulation so that all aspects of a child's development can grow optimally. One important aspect to develop is literacy skills, which include language skills, critical thinking, and understanding the meaning of symbols or texts, which will be the basis for the learning process in the future (Adelina et al., 2023).

Literacy for early childhood is not merely the mechanical ability to read and write, but more broadly, the skill to understand, express, and communicate ideas orally and in writing. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology defines literacy as a set of abilities that include reading, writing, researching, identifying, finding, analyzing, and concluding information (Irma et al., 2022). Therefore, early childhood literacy is an important foundation for the development of 21st-century skills that include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (4C).

In the context of education in Indonesia, literacy is often a primary concern because low basic literacy skills in advanced students are often rooted in suboptimal stimulation from an early age (OECD, 2023). Many children enter elementary school with minimal reading and writing skills, as early childhood education institutions often focus predominantly on play and socio-emotional aspects. However, literacy development does not have to be at odds with a playful approach, but can be integrated in a fun and contextual way into children's daily lives (Hewi et al., 2024).

Research (Afnida & Suparno, 2020) confirms that strengthening literacy from an early age contributes to children's readiness to face the challenges of learning at the next level. Similarly, (Hewi et al., 2024) state that communication skills, both oral and written, are fundamental skills that every individual must possess, and these skills need to be developed from preschool. Therefore, literacy is not only an academic skill but also part of the process of character formation, ways of thinking, and how to interact with the environment.

Teachers, as learning facilitators, play a strategic role in fostering children's literacy. According to (Priyanti et al., 2025), the success of early childhood literacy depends heavily on teachers' strategies in designing engaging, interactive, and developmentally appropriate learning activities. Teachers are required not only to teach letters and words but also to create meaningful learning experiences through activities that actively engage children.

This context is the background to the research in KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban. This Islamic Kindergarten (KB) is an Islamic educational institution in Tuban Regency that focuses on developing children's character and spiritual intelligence. Interviews with teachers and guardians at the beginning of the 2025/2026 academic year revealed that the majority of parents are young people (Gen Z) with a high level of awareness of the importance of literacy. They are accustomed to reading, accessing digital information, and writing on social media. However, they face challenges in instilling literacy habits in their young children, especially in non-digital and real-world contexts.

Many parents hope that schools can provide literacy stimulation that doesn't burden their children, but remains enjoyable and developmentally appropriate. Children aged 4–6 years have short attention spans and prefer playful activities. Therefore, the learning strategies implemented by teachers must integrate elements of play, storytelling, drawing, and experimentation to foster natural literacy development (David Triatna & Khamim Zarkasih Putro, 2024).

One of the strategies that was later developed by teachers at the KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban was the morning journal habit. This activity is held every morning before the start of teaching and learning. Children are invited to draw pictures of things they experience at home, on the way to school, or in other interesting experiences. The teacher listens as the children share their ideas or share their own versions (*Field Observation of KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban*, 2025).

This morning journal habit was chosen because it has many benefits for the development of literacy in children. According to Nida Ulfadilah & Setiasih (2024), morning journals can be a place for children to practice pre-reading and pre-writing contextually. Children not only learn to write letters, but also learn to remember experiences, express ideas, and express themselves through language and images. In other words, morning journal activities connect children's real world with the literacy learning process.

Based on field observations, the implementation of morning journals at the Insan Kamil Islamic Kindergarten (KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban) has proven to be engaging for children. Every morning, the teacher prepares simple materials such as journal paper, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, and word cards. The children sit in a circle with a folding table in front of them, drawing on their paper. The children have the opportunity to draw things they experience at home, on the way to school, or in other interesting experiences. Then, from the drawings, the children share their imaginations with the teacher, what they drew, and how they feel at that moment. The teacher provides motivation and invites the children to write the most dominant image on their paper, such as writing the words "House, Car, and Zoo." After that, the children are asked to put their drawings in the work locker according to their names. For children who cannot yet write letters, the teacher helps write the words based on the child's pronunciation, then the child imitates the writing. (*Documentation of the Morning Journal Activities of the Islamic KBTK Insan Kamil Tuban*, 2025). In this way, writing activities become fun and meaningful.

From a socio-emotional perspective, morning journaling also has positive impacts. Children learn to wait their turn, listen to their peers' stories, and appreciate the work of both themselves and others. This activity fosters self-confidence and two-way communication between teachers and students. Furthermore, teachers can gauge the children's well-being each morning through

their stories, allowing them to adjust their teaching approach to suit their moods. (*Al Malik Class Teacher Interview*, 2025). This approach is in line with the PAUD philosophy of playing while learning, where children are actively involved through direct experience (Arleen Amidjaja, Anna Farida Kurniasari Ni Ekawati, 2023). Teachers act as guides who facilitate children's discovery of meaning, not simply teaching the technical skills of writing letters. This also aligns with the concept of Freedom to Learn, which emphasizes the flexibility and uniqueness of children's learning processes. However, implementing morning journaling habits also presents challenges. Not all children are enthusiastic every day, especially at the beginning. Some children find it difficult to express ideas or are not yet accustomed to writing. Teachers need to take an individual approach, provide motivation, and avoid forcing perfect writing. Another challenge is the limited time in the morning because school opening activities are usually short. Therefore, teachers need to adjust the duration so that the activity remains effective and does not interfere with other teaching and learning schedules (*Reflection Notes of Islamic KBTK Teacher Insan Kamil Tuban*, 2025).

Based on teacher reflections, this activity not only improved children's literacy skills but also changed communication patterns between teachers, children, and parents. Many parents then emulated this habit at home by providing small diaries for their children. Children also became more open about sharing their experiences, both through drawings and simple writing. Thus, the habit of morning journaling has a positive ripple effect on children's learning environments, both at school and at home (*School Internal Evaluation Report*, 2025).

Academically, this activity supports the achievement of basic competencies in the Independent Curriculum, particularly in the Language and Early Literacy elements. Children are trained to understand instructions, express ideas, recognize letter and word symbols, and develop logical thinking skills. *Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Education Units (TK/RA/BA, KB, SPS, TPA)*, n.d.). Thus, the habit of morning journaling is not just an additional activity, but an integral part of thematic learning that supports the achievement of the Pancasila student profile, such as faithful, independent, creative, and critical thinkers.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that the importance of developing early childhood literacy through morning journal habituation activities is a real need and relevant to the current educational conditions. This study was conducted to describe teacher strategies in stimulating early childhood literacy through morning journal habituation, and to examine the extent to which these activities influence the literacy skills and character of children at the Insan Kamil Islamic Kindergarten (KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban). With a deep understanding of this practice, it is hoped that the results of this study can serve as a reference for other PAUD teachers in developing child-friendly, meaningful, and sustainable literacy learning innovations.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach because it aims to describe and understand in-depth the teacher's strategy in stimulating early childhood literacy through the habit of morning journals at the Insan Kamil Islamic Kindergarten (KBTK Islam) in Tuban. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for uncovering social phenomena and the natural behavior of subjects in a learning context without variable manipulation. According to Nurmawati, the qualitative descriptive method allows researchers to explain events based on the meanings held by participants (Nurmawati, D., 2025). The study was conducted at the Insan Kamil Islamic Kindergarten (KBTK Islam) in Tuban, an integrated Islamic educational institution that has routinely implemented morning journal activities since the 2021/2022 academic year. The research subjects consisted of three teachers (Class Al Malik, Class Al Alim, Class Al Ghaffar), twelve children aged 5–6 years, and several parents who supported children's literacy activities at home (*Al Malik Class Teacher Interview*, 2025).

Data collection techniques include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. (Taufiq et al., 2024). Observations were conducted to directly observe the morning

journal activity, interactions between teachers and children, and the forms of literacy stimulation provided. Interviews were used to explore teachers' experiences and parents' perceptions of the benefits of this activity, while documentation in the form of activity photos, children's journal entries, and teachers' reflection notes served as supporting evidence (Sugiono, 2022). Data were analyzed interactively following the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M., 2014). To ensure data validity, researchers use source and technique triangulation techniques, and carry out member checks with teachers to ensure the alignment between the researcher's interpretation and actual conditions in the field (Moleong, L. J., 2021). Through this approach, the research is expected to provide an objective picture of teacher strategies in stimulating early childhood literacy through the practice of morning journaling at the Insan Kamil Islamic Kindergarten (KBTK Islam) in Tuban.

Results and Discussion

The research results show that teachers at the Insan Kamil Islamic Kindergarten (KBTK Islam) in Tuban have successfully implemented morning journaling as a strategy to stimulate early childhood literacy skills. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, this activity is carried out routinely every morning before the learning process begins. Children are invited to write or draw about their experiences at home, their journey to school, or their favorite activities. Teachers play an active role as facilitators and models, helping children write simple sentences and guiding them to retell their work in front of their peers (Nida Ulfadilah & Setiasih, 2024).

Morning journal activities have been proven to be effective in improving children's literacy skills, especially in the four main aspects, namely listening, speaking, reading, and early writing. In the early stages, some children are only able to draw without writing. However, after a few weeks of practice, children begin to add simple words and sentences such as "I eat rice" or "I play ball." This change indicates the development of phonological awareness and the relationship between symbols and meaning, as explained by Clay, who states that children's literacy development begins with an awareness of symbols and letter shapes before understanding the functions of conventional reading and writing (Clay, 1991).

Teachers employ several key strategies to support this activity. First, they provide concrete examples by writing simple sentences on the board and pronouncing them so that children become familiar with letters and their sounds. Second, they foster two-way interaction through story-sharing sessions, which train children in listening and speaking skills before writing. Third, they provide individual support, especially for children who still have difficulty writing letters or expressing ideas. This strategy aligns with theory *scaffolding* from Vygotsky, who emphasized the importance of adult support in helping children achieve their developmental potential (Vygotsky, L. S., 1978).

In addition, teachers also use interesting learning media, activities such as picture journals, letter cards, and reward stickers can increase children's motivation. At the end of each activity, several children are asked to read their journal entries aloud to the class. This activity fosters speaking skills, self-confidence, and pride in their work. These findings support Ulfadilah's research, which found that morning journaling can foster children's interest in reading and writing because it is conducted in a positive and enjoyable atmosphere (Nida Ulfadilah & Setiasih, 2024).

From a social and emotional perspective, morning journaling also has a positive impact. Children learn to wait their turn, respect their peers' opinions, and accept feedback from teachers. Interviews revealed that teachers reported that children are now more communicative and confident in speaking in front of the class. Some children have even begun writing or drawing at home, demonstrating that literacy habits have been formed and reinforced by family support. This aligns with Baharudin Musthafa's view that literacy in early childhood is not only related to cognitive abilities (Baharudin, 2020) but also shapes children's social attitudes, emotions, and character. Morning journaling also serves as a means of emotional communication between teachers and children. The contents of children's journals often reflect their feelings, such as

sentences like "*I'm sad because my cat is lost*", which signals teachers to provide emotional support. Thus, literacy serves as a means of self-expression and a bridge of communication between children and adults.

In the context of learning, the morning journal at KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban supports the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, especially on the elements of *Early Language and Literacy*. Through these activities, children learn to understand instructions, express ideas verbally and in writing, and connect personal experiences to ongoing learning. This approach aligns with the concept of *learning through play*, where children learn through enjoyable, real-life experiences without academic pressure (Arleen Amidjaja, Anna Farida Kurniasari Ni Ekawati, 2023). However, teachers face several challenges in implementing this activity, such as limited time in the morning and varying abilities of children. Teachers need to provide differentiated support according to individual needs. However, with teacher consistency and creativity, these challenges can be overcome. After several months of implementation, children showed significant improvements in letter writing accuracy, word recognition, and confidence in expressing ideas (*Reflection Notes of Islamic KBTK Teacher Insan Kamil Tuban*, 2025)

Overall, the results of this study indicate that morning journaling is an effective, contextual, and enjoyable strategy for stimulating early childhood literacy. The success of this activity is inseparable from the role of teachers as facilitators, parental support, and consistent implementation. These findings support Afnida and Suparno's view that early childhood literacy activities will be successful if they are designed meaningfully, relevant to children's lives, and accompanied by positive environmental support (Afnida & Suparno, 2020). Thus, morning journaling can be a good practice (*best practice*) in building a culture of literacy from an early age in PAUD institutions.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted at KBTK Islam Insan Kamil Tuban, it can be concluded that the morning journal habituation activity is an effective, contextual, and enjoyable strategy for stimulating early childhood literacy skills. Through this activity, children are trained to express their experiences and feelings through simple writing and drawings, while simultaneously learning to understand the relationship between symbols, sounds, and meaning in language. Morning journal activities help develop four main aspects of literacy: listening, speaking, reading, and early writing skills, which form the foundation for academic development at the next level.

Teachers play a crucial role in the success of this activity. Strategies implemented include providing concrete examples, individual guidance, using engaging learning media, and creating a positive and interactive learning environment. Teachers act not only as instructors but also as facilitators and companions, providing emotional support to children. This aligns with the principles of scaffolding, which emphasize the importance of adult support in building children's competencies.

Morning journaling also contributes to children's social and emotional development. Through the process of writing and storytelling, children learn to wait their turn, respect others' opinions, and develop self-confidence. Furthermore, teachers can understand children's emotional states through their journal entries, thus serving as a means of emotional communication between teachers and students. From a character perspective, morning journaling fosters discipline, responsibility, and independence.

The findings of this study indicate that the successful implementation of morning journaling depends not only on routine activities but also on teacher creativity and family support. Consistent literacy habits at school can spread to the home, fostering collaboration between teachers and parents in fostering a culture of literacy from an early age. Thus, morning journaling

can be a good practice (*best practice*) which supports the objectives of the Independent Curriculum with an approach *Deep learning*-his/her, especially in forming children who are faithful, independent, creative, think critically, and have good communication skills.

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