

Strengthening Students' Literacy and Character through Developing Educational Games for Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia

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Abstract

Many children of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) are undocumented in Malaysia, causing difficulties in various access areas, one of which is in the education sector. Non-formal education dominates PMI children, influencing children's literacy knowledge, which could be more optimal and impact their weak national character. This study includes empowerment by the Indonesian Young Spirit Foundation (SMI) in the education sector targeting PMI children, which was carried out in Sanggar Belajar (SB) Hulu Kelang and Hulu Langat, Malaysia. The platform for this empowerment is in the form of educational learning activities in the form of word reading and bingo games, which are collaborated with the use of regional songs in gymnastics activities, which are very important to be realized in the context of internalizing literacy knowledge in order to strengthen national character in fulfilling educational rights and strengthening the character of PMI children in Malaysia. It will be carried out from 14 to 21 July 2023. This empowerment uses descriptive qualitative research methods and a Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL) approach in the implementation process. PMI children will receive many benefits from the empowerment carried out by the SMI Foundation, including increased self-confidence in reading aloud, trained verbal skills, positive interactions, an atmosphere of cooperation, improved children's motor skills, and children feel the spirit of cultural values they have learned. The empowerment of this program is hoped to provide sustainable benefits for PMI children and teachers.

Keywords: *Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Character, Literacy, Empowerment, Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

The problems in education are endless; national and international research shows the low literacy rate in Indonesia (Nirmala, 2022) in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS 2011 researched developed and developing countries studying reading in elementary school children worldwide, covering 45 countries in coordination with The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The results obtained placed Indonesia in the last three positions out of 45 countries.

Indonesia ranks 71st out of 72 countries based on Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) research in 2012; literacy study research was also carried out by a three-year Central Statistics Agency (BPS) survey, which contained a low percentage of interest in

reading compared to watching. This research was last conducted on Indonesian children in 2012. In 2015, according to Femina sources, PISA ranked Indonesia 64th out of 72 countries (Nirmala, 2022). PISA also ranked Indonesia 74th in reading studies in the 2018 annual survey (Hewi et al., 2020).

National library data in 2022 shows that Indonesian people's reading interest level is 63.9 points, an increase based on a comparison from the previous year, which was only 59.52 points source (Rizaty, 2023). This increase will likely provide awareness that reading is the basis of efforts to improve the quality of human resources in facing the increasingly growing era of globalization. However, many people still think that reading is an activity to kill time, even though reading is an activity to fill time (to fill full time) to fulfill individual knowledge (Ifaha, 2020).

Literacy is part of education. Education aims to help students' physical and spiritual souls from their natural nature towards a better civilization (Sujana I W C, 2019). Education is needed to form people with high intellectual and moral qualities. As stated in Law no. 20 of 2003, article 3 states that National Education aims to function in developing abilities, building character, and in order to make the nation's life more intelligent in order to become human beings who meet the nation's expectations (Sari et al., 2021). Primary education is an initial need and fundamental right for children, as stated in the Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG 2) regarding obtaining primary education for all groups (Simanjuntak, 2018). Therefore, obtaining education and teaching is part of children's rights that must be fulfilled.

However, in reality, the issue of enforcing children's convention rights is still a hot topic in cases of limited access to education for the children of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in Malaysia (Udhwalalita & Hakim, 2023). Until now, this is still a severe problem. Malaysia is one of the diaspora countries receiving PMI with a relatively large number, namely 1.29 million people, according to data from the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency 2022 (Novrizaldy, 2023), while based on Bank Indonesia data, PMI in Malaysia shows the highest number, namely 1.67 million. People the second position is in Saudi Arabia, with a total of 837 thousand PMI people, and as many as 339 thousand PMI people are located in Hong Kong (Rizaty, 2023), based on data from the PMI diaspora who departed non-procedurally; this shows a relatively high number, which has an impact on offspring those who often have problems with administrative birth records (birth certificates), as well as access to essential public services (Aini, 2019). This phenomenon significantly impacts their access to education. Even though the Indonesian government provides educational services on the Malaysian Peninsula through the Indonesian School Institute Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), not all Indonesian migrant children can access educational facilities due to distance access and administrative problems.

Furthermore, with the government's efforts to fight for the rights of PMI children and education equality, children in Indonesia also have the right to receive PMI diaspora children in Malaysia. Therefore, the government has made changes to Law No. 23 of 2002 contained in Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, which states that child protection provisions are every activity that guarantees and protects children's right to life, as well as all protection from violence and discrimination (Apriyanita, 2017). Apart from making changes, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, during a working visit to Malaysia, asked the Malaysian government to give undocumented PMI children the opportunity to go to school (Musli et al., 2023) by the international provisions of the UN mandate regarding the Universal Declaration in which there are Human Rights, the Convention on Children's Rights and the Convention on Migrant Workers including their family members, the countries of Indonesia and Malaysia have accepted this to comply with the legal values therein mutually (Sulastri et al., 2014).

Moreover, migrant children who cannot attend formal schools will usually study at Sanggar Bimbingan (SB), which is non-formal education (Utomo et al., 2023); Sanggar Guidance is similar to the Community Learning Center (CLC), which is a form of realization of the Indonesian government's responsibility towards ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Handoyo, 2020).

Relevant to the conditions in the field, there are 9,000 PMI children registered at the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia with limited birth documents, giving rise to a considerable dominance in the non-formal education of PMI children in Malaysia. Indonesian Young Spirit Foundation (SMI) is an organization that facilitates youth in community service programs in the sectors of education, health, environment, tourism, and creative economy. From 14 to 21 July 2023, one of SMI's activities with the theme Youth Teaching Chapter Malaysia, which has integrity in the field of education, is supported by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) and Kuala Lumpur International School (SIKL). SIKL is the parent school of learning studios in Malaysia. One of the SMI Youth Teaching programs is located at Sanggar Belajar (SB) Hulu Kelang and Hulu Langat, one of which operates in the education sector and is present as a resolution to fulfill children's educational rights in improving basic reading skills, as well as internalizing literacy knowledge in the form of empowering PMI children through SMI educational learning with word reading games for children aged 4 to 6 years, and bingo aged 7 to 12 years as well as the implementation of regional songs in gymnastics activities in order to strengthen national character, with the implementation of this empowerment it is hoped that it can become the principal capital for PMI children to increase their love of towards the world of literacy and as an opportunity to strengthen national character to increase the sense of nationalism and cultural love for the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

2. METHOD

The Semangat Muda Indonesia (SMI) Foundation carried out the empowerment of PMI children in Malaysia which was carried out from 14 to 21 July, using descriptive qualitative research methods to gain an understanding of a context by describing it in detail and depth naturally according to the conditions in the field (Rijal Fadli, 2021). This empowerment was carried out for the children of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) at Sanggar Belajar (SB) Hulu Kelang and Hulu Langat Malaysia with 40 students of various ages, from 4 to 12 years old.

SMI Youth Teaching activities in the educational learning work program through word reading and bingo games, as well as the implementation of regional songs in these gymnastics activities, use the Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL) approach, CTL according to (Hasnawati, 2006.) is a learning concept that makes it easier for teachers to connect the material with children's contextual experiences to encourage students to gain knowledge with implementation in their lives as individuals, family members, and society. This contextual approach involves students actively in the learning process.

The educational learning process is learning to read words for children aged 4 to 6 years and bingo aged 7 to 12 years. This educational game for reading words and bingo uses paper media containing varied guesses, which can stimulate students to be active in learning. This educational bingo game can train self-confidence and cooperation between friends and practice communication skills.

Empowerment of PMI children is located in Hulu Kelang and Hulu Langat Learning Studios (SB). SB Hulu Kelang is located at Jalan Hulu Kelang, Gombak, Selangor. SB Hulu Langat is located in Kampung Sungai Semungkis, Hulu Langat, Malaysia. This empowerment activity focuses on the education sector for PMI children in SB Hulu Kelang and Hulu Langat. The data collection period was seven days, from 14 to 21 July 2023.

The assessment is carried out from a series of activities that have been implemented in the Contextual teaching Learning approach using assessment; discussions assessed from the aspect of students' level of ability in communicating between friends; interview: measure the level of students' ability to understand the learning that has been implemented; paper: various types of tests, one of which is on children's thinking processes in finding answers during the educational bingo game, to determine the level of thinking of students; observation: the process of assessing students' attitudes and behavior during learning; demonstration: this assessment is carried out to measure the realization of students' ideas into actual forms that can be observed, heard, and can be applied to art, drama, movement, and music. This demonstration assessment is used to see students' ideas in the learning process in actual application, whether in educational word reading games, bingo, or the implementation of regional songs in gymnastics activities.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The SMI educational learning work program and the implementation of regional songs in gymnastics are carried out to empower PMI children at the Hulu Langat Learning Studio (SB) to internalize literacy knowledge and strengthen national character. The types of educational games implemented are word reading and bingo, using printed paper learning media with pictures and puzzles containing various types of reading.

Teachers take a role during the learning process to empower students to become agents of change for themselves and all components in the class. The teacher distributes word reading and bingo sheets adapted to the student's age characteristics. The educational word reading game is intended to train SB (Study Learning) students in reading and literacy to give them the courage to read aloud. Meanwhile, this educational bingo game, which contains guessing, aims to enable SB students to improve their cognitive thinking processes, strengthen their self-confidence when communicating, practice their language skills in communication, and instill social sensitivity.

Students and teachers implement regional songs together in this gymnastics activity. The regional song used in these gymnastics is *Gemu Fa Mire*, which comes from NTT. The meaning of the song *Gemu Fa Mire* is that it tells the story of a journey full of joy, especially for the people of Maumere, who have a cheerful impression of the song (Advensia Bogar, 2024). This educational game provides a fun learning experience for educators and students (Veronica, 2018). The educational games that have been implemented have many positive benefits for children, including 1) Encouraging children's creativity and development, 2) Improving children's motor skills, 3) Increasing focus on children, 4) Increasing self-confidence, 5) Facilities for socializing, 6) Creating learning experience of the sense of play, 7) Practicing language skills in children, 8) Having an influence on the formation of attitudes and character, 9) Strengthening recognition of colors, shapes, and textures, 10) Expanding students' knowledge, 11) Facilities for introducing new and fun learning media, 11) Introduction to the concept of cause and effect as a rule of the game (Darubekti, 2021). In the educational bingo game process, children are required to read aloud, and opportunities are provided for children to interact with teachers and friends directly to develop new positive characters in children, especially in internalizing literacy knowledge. Educators can also monitor and guide children who need more fluency in reading skills.

Educational learning games are the basis for developing children's character by improving social skills and verbal communication, fostering a sense of cooperation, and improving motor skills (Huda, 2018). These skills can be the basis for developing various positive characters in children. Teachers play a role in improving the basic skills possessed by

children, including developing national character. This can be done by instilling character values in children from an early age through the media of national and patriotic songs, which are believed to influence the formation of national character. This is one solution to the problem of the crisis in the character of the Indonesian nation (Atminias, 2022).

Educational games based on assessment have been proven to internalize literacy knowledge and build students' basic skills. Collaborating the implementation of regional songs with gymnastics activities can also encourage children to be motivated to read the lyrics and sing loudly and can provide children with an understanding and strengthening of national character according to the meaning contained in the song lyrics, whether they are nationalist or songs that have various contents. Cultural, moral, social, and life values (Ridwan et al., 2022)

4. CONCLUSION

Reading is one of the essential competencies that children must master in developing knowledge of their potential as a capability asset in the future, which becomes a guide for the formation of national character in early childhood development. The work program of the Indonesian Young Spirit Foundation (SMI) and the relevance of the problems of PMI diaspora children in Malaysia through educational learning programs using bingo media in collaboration with the implementation of national and regional songs in gymnastics activities are expected to internalize literacy knowledge in strengthening national character. SMI's programs have left a positive imprint on students and teachers. The empowerment carried out is very beneficial because the work program being realized is a superior work program that improves children's qualifications in the field of reading and can instill literacy values in PMI children to be applied continuously in everyday life.

5. REFERENCES

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