



## CHILD-FRIENDLY LIBRARY MANAGEMENT AS A STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN READING LITERACY IN ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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### Abstract;

This study aimed to analyze how child-friendly library management can serve as a strategic approach to strengthen reading literacy in Islamic elementary education. The research was conducted at SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta, an Islamic primary school integrating literacy and moral education. Using a qualitative descriptive design with a single case study approach, data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis involving the principal, librarian, teachers, and students. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, comprising reduction, display, and conclusion drawing.

The results revealed that child-friendly management was implemented through three interrelated dimensions: the physical design of the library, collaboration among teachers, the librarian, and parents, and the integration of literacy programs grounded in Islamic values. The library provided accessible reading spaces, diverse collections, and a digital library platform that increased students' engagement and reading frequency. Collaborative literacy programs such as *Gemar Baca Buku* and *Home Reading* successfully nurtured students' reading motivation and moral reflection.

The study concludes that a child-friendly library, when managed as a holistic learning ecosystem, can significantly enhance reading literacy while aligning with the ethical and cultural context of Islamic education. This research contributes to the field of educational management by introducing a culturally responsive model that integrates global child-centered principles with local religious and pedagogical values.

**Keywords:** *Child-Friendly Library Management, Reading Literacy, Islamic Elementary Education, Qualitative Study, Literacy Culture*

### Introduction

Reading literacy has become a central focus in global educational agendas, as it represents not only a basic academic skill but also a foundation for lifelong learning. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2018) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2021), Indonesian students' reading achievement remains below the international average, highlighting persistent challenges in developing students' motivation and engagement with reading. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia (MoECRT, 2023) has therefore emphasized literacy as a key competence in the Merdeka Curriculum and promoted the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah*). Within this

context, school libraries play a pivotal role as centers of literacy learning. However, many elementary school libraries, particularly in Islamic schools, are still underutilized and lack an environment that supports students' emotional and intellectual engagement with reading (Supriati, 2021).

A child-friendly library provides a learning environment designed to be inclusive, safe, and stimulating for children. According to UNICEF (2017), child-friendly educational settings must ensure that children feel respected, interested, and motivated to explore knowledge independently. When applied to libraries, this concept involves not only physical design but also management, collection development, and service delivery tailored to children's developmental characteristics. Research in early literacy has shown that access to appealing and age-appropriate reading materials significantly enhances reading motivation and comprehension (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2020). Similarly, studies by UNESCO (2020) and OECD (2019) affirm that child-centered library management can transform reading into an enjoyable social activity that fosters curiosity and a love for learning.

In Indonesia, the development of reading interest remains a challenge due to unequal access to books, insufficient librarian competence, and limited integration of literacy activities within the school curriculum (Yuliana & Mardiyana, 2021; Luthfiah, 2015). Several studies have examined library management in schools, such as Mansyur (2015), who emphasized that effective planning, organization, and supervision can enhance library services and promote information literacy. Suhardini (2011) also highlighted that library management must align with the school's educational goals to create an effective learning ecosystem. In addition, Murdowo et al. (2020) demonstrated that interior design and environmental aesthetics are critical factors influencing children's reading engagement, particularly when combined with participatory reading programs. More recent research by Purwadi et al. (2021) and Saputri et al. (2023) explored digital library innovation as a strategy to expand access to reading materials through information technology, yet such approaches often overlook the socio-emotional dimensions of reading in younger learners.

Child-friendly library management requires the integration of physical, pedagogical, and social components. Nashruddin (2016) and Ardiansyah (2020) found that libraries that combine friendly services, diverse collections, and supportive reading programs are more successful in cultivating a reading culture among primary school students. Meanwhile, Silvana and Setiani (2018) argued that teacher librarians serve as mediators who connect students with knowledge sources, guiding them in developing both reading habits and information-seeking skills. This aligns with the principles of the School Literacy Movement, which promotes collaboration between teachers, librarians, and parents to establish daily reading routines. The integration of such programs in Islamic schools, however, remains underexplored despite their potential to reinforce both literacy and character education grounded in religious values.

Islamic elementary education presents unique opportunities and challenges in promoting literacy. On the one hand, Islamic schools often emphasize moral and spiritual development, which can be harmonized with literacy values such as reflection, empathy, and discipline. On the other hand, studies by Oyewo (2012) and Boelens (2007) indicate that school librarians in faith-based institutions frequently lack the professional development and resources necessary to manage modern, child-centered libraries effectively. Consequently, although many Islamic schools possess library facilities, they often

fail to function as dynamic learning hubs. Research by Syirojudin et al. (2023) and Kholisa and Ramadhanissholihah (2024) suggested that school libraries in Islamic settings need systematic management strategies that integrate technology, child psychology, and pedagogical innovation to sustain students' reading motivation.

Despite the growing body of literature on library management and literacy education, limited studies have examined the intersection between child-friendly management principles and Islamic elementary school contexts. Most prior research has focused separately on either physical aspects of library design (Murdowo et al., 2020), digitalization processes (Purwadi et al., 2021), or the general role of libraries in supporting literacy programs (Supriati, 2021; Ardiansyah, 2020). Very few studies have analyzed how the holistic management of a library—covering facilities, human resources, service delivery, and literacy activities—can create a nurturing reading environment that aligns with both pedagogical and religious values. This research gap underscores the need to explore practical models of child-friendly library management that are contextually relevant to Islamic elementary education in Indonesia.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of child-friendly library management as a strategy to strengthen reading literacy among students in an Islamic elementary school, namely SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta. The research focuses on how library management practices—ranging from physical design and book collection curation to service orientation and teacher–librarian collaboration—contribute to fostering a sustainable culture of reading within the school community. By providing empirical insights from a real educational context, this study seeks to bridge theoretical frameworks on child-friendly education (UNICEF, 2017; UNESCO, 2020) with the practical realities of Islamic elementary education. The findings are expected to contribute to developing a contextual model for literacy-based library management and to inform school administrators and policymakers in designing child-centered literacy environments that resonate with Indonesia's educational and cultural values.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study employed a **qualitative descriptive design** to explore how child-friendly library management was implemented to strengthen students' reading literacy within the context of an Islamic elementary school. The qualitative approach was chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of management practices, environmental characteristics, and human interactions that shape students' reading culture. The research design was structured as a **single case study**, focusing on the lived experiences and organizational practices within one institution—SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta. This design enabled the researcher to capture holistic and contextualized data that reflect real-world school dynamics rather than isolated variables or quantitative measurements.

### Data and Sources of Data

The study was conducted at **SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta**, an Islamic elementary school known for integrating faith-based values with a modern curriculum. The school was purposefully selected due to its ongoing initiatives to create a child-friendly library environment as part of its literacy development program.

The **informants** in this study consisted of;

**One school principal**, who oversaw institutional management and policy implementation.

**One librarian**, who was directly responsible for organizing collections, maintaining facilities, and managing library activities.

**Three classroom teachers**, who were actively involved in literacy programs and collaborated with the librarian in designing reading activities.

**Ten students** (five male and five female) from grades 4–6, selected through purposive sampling based on their active participation in library activities and varying levels of reading interest.

This combination of participants allowed triangulation across managerial, pedagogical, and learner perspectives. The inclusion criteria were: (1) participants had direct involvement with library management or literacy programs, and (2) they had been part of the school community for at least one academic year. Participants who were not directly engaged in library or literacy activities were excluded to maintain relevance and data focus.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection was conducted over a two-month period (March–April 2024) using three primary techniques: **observation**, **semi-structured interviews**, and **document analysis**.

#### **1. Observation**

Observations were carried out directly in the library area to examine physical layout, user behavior, and reading activities. The researcher used a structured observation sheet that included indicators such as:

Accessibility and spatial arrangement of the library (shelves, reading corners, lighting, seating).

Child-friendliness of facilities (color, display, signage, and comfort).

Interaction patterns between librarian, teachers, and students.

Frequency and duration of library visits.

Field notes and photos (with consent) were used to record the natural setting of library usage.

#### **2. Semi-structured Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with all informants using separate interview guides tailored to their roles.

For **school leaders**, questions focused on management policies, funding, and literacy vision.

For **teachers**, questions examined teaching integration, collaboration with the library, and perceived impact on reading motivation.

For **the librarian**, the guide included questions about collection management, service delivery, and challenges in maintaining a child-friendly environment.

For **students**, the questions explored reading preferences, motivations, and feelings toward the library space. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent.

The interview guide was **pilot-tested** with one teacher and one student from another Islamic elementary school to ensure clarity, relevance, and age appropriateness. Minor adjustments were made to wording to simplify terms for child participants.

#### **3. Document Analysis**

Supporting documents such as library management manuals, reading program schedules, student reading logs, and school literacy policies were analyzed to complement the primary data. These documents helped to verify management procedures and confirm information obtained from interviews and observations.

### **Data Validity and Trustworthiness**

To ensure data validity, this study applied **Lincoln and Guba's (1985)** four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

- **Credibility** was ensured through triangulation of data sources (teachers, librarian, students, and school principal) and data collection methods (observation, interviews, and documentation). Member checking was conducted by summarizing interview results and confirming them with participants.
- **Transferability** was supported by providing a thick description of the research setting, allowing readers to assess applicability in similar contexts.
- **Dependability** was established through maintaining a detailed audit trail, including field notes, interview transcripts, and coding records.
- **Confirmability** was strengthened by reflective journaling and peer debriefing with two academic colleagues who reviewed the coding consistency and interpretation of findings.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data were analyzed using **Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model**, which involves three concurrent stages:

1. **Data Reduction:** Raw data from observations, interviews, and documents were transcribed, read repeatedly, and coded into initial categories such as "library management," "child-friendly design," "teacher-librarian collaboration," and "reading motivation."
2. **Data Display:** Organized data were presented in matrices and narrative tables to identify patterns and relationships between management strategies and students' reading engagement.
3. **Conclusion Drawing and Verification:** Themes were refined through iterative comparison across data sources. Emerging interpretations were continuously validated against the original data and theoretical framework.

The final thematic analysis produced three core themes: (1) management and physical environment of the library, (2) human resource collaboration in supporting literacy, and (3) the integration of library programs in nurturing students' reading culture.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, and written consent was obtained from teachers and parents of participating students. The school name was retained with institutional permission for academic transparency, while individual participant identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

### *Results*

The findings of this study reveal how SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta implemented child-friendly library management to cultivate students' reading literacy within an Islamic educational environment. The results are presented under three main themes: **(1) Library management and physical**

**environment, (2) Human resource collaboration in supporting literacy, and (3) Integration of library programs in nurturing reading culture.**

## **1. Library Management and Physical Environment**

### **1.1. Library Layout and Accessibility**

The SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta library was designed with accessibility and child comfort as its primary considerations. The library is located near the main academic building, ensuring easy access for all students. Shelves are arranged by grade level and reading difficulty, and labels use color codes that correspond to reading categories (e.g., green for beginner, blue for intermediate, and yellow for advanced). The layout includes both **table-and-chair reading zones** for group learning and **carpeted corners** for relaxed, individual reading. Observation data showed that students frequently gathered in the carpeted reading area after class, treating it as a leisure space rather than a formal study area. This informal setting encouraged voluntary reading behavior and helped eliminate the perception that reading is a compulsory task.

### **1.2. Child-Friendly Design Elements**

The library environment was aesthetically engaging. Walls were painted in bright colors with Islamic calligraphy, motivational quotes, and illustrations of storybook characters. Lighting and ventilation were well maintained, creating a calm and safe atmosphere. A prayer corner was integrated into the space, reflecting the Islamic character of the school. Students expressed positive emotions about the library environment. One student mentioned, *“I like reading in the corner near the green wall because it feels peaceful.”* These design elements contributed to the library’s identity as both a learning and spiritual space, aligning with UNICEF’s (2017) principle that child-friendly spaces should respect children’s emotional and cultural identities.

### **1.3. Collection Management**

The library collection consisted of approximately 3,200 printed books, including textbooks, storybooks, encyclopedias, Islamic literature, and local folktales. Book selection followed two main criteria: (1) relevance to students’ age and reading ability, and (2) alignment with Islamic values and moral development. The librarian maintained a balance between religious and general knowledge resources, ensuring that reading materials supported both literacy and character education.

Procurement was carried out through collaboration with local publishers and community donations. The library also subscribed to two children’s magazines and several online reading platforms. The librarian noted that books with visual illustrations and simple narratives—particularly moral stories and adventure tales—were most frequently borrowed.

### **1.4. Digital Library Integration**

In 2023, SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta launched its **Digital Library System** ([www.digilib.alfirdausina.net](http://www.digilib.alfirdausina.net)). The system allowed students and teachers to access e-books and digital magazines via tablets or the school’s computer lab. Usage data indicated that upper-grade students preferred using the digital platform to read educational comics and science materials. Although digital access remained supplementary to printed collections, it increased students’ exposure to diverse reading formats. Teachers reported that the digital library also supported homework activities, helping students find references independently.

## **Human Resource Collaboration in Supporting Literacy**

### **2.1. The Role of the Principal**

The principal acted as the main policy driver in developing the school's literacy culture. He allocated a portion of the school's operational budget for library enhancement and initiated a *School Literacy Committee* that included teachers, the librarian, and parent representatives. The principal explained during the interview:

*"The library is not just a storage of books; it is the heart of our learning environment. We try to make every child feel that reading is part of their daily routine."*

He also established a policy that every classroom must visit the library at least once a week as part of the integrated literacy timetable.

### **2.2. The Role of the Librarian**

The librarian served as both an information manager and a literacy facilitator. Daily routines included cataloguing, guiding students in book selection, and conducting short reading sessions. The librarian also developed **reading challenge programs**, where students who finished a certain number of books received certificates and recognition during the Monday assembly. This gamification strategy successfully increased borrowing frequency, especially among grades 3–5.

Moreover, the librarian actively collaborated with teachers to align library activities with classroom topics. For instance, when students learned about "Environmental Care" in science class, the librarian prepared a display of related storybooks and picture dictionaries.

### **2.3. The Role of Teachers**

Teachers played a crucial mediating role between students and the library. They were responsible for embedding reading activities within classroom routines through a daily *15-Minute Reading Program* implemented before the first lesson. Teachers often accompanied students to the library, recommended suitable books, and encouraged reading reflection through simple journaling. One teacher noted, *"I don't force them to summarize; I ask them to draw what they imagine from the story."* This approach made reading comprehension more expressive and enjoyable.

Teachers also participated in professional collaboration with the librarian by organizing **Reading Corners** in classrooms, using books rotated from the library collection. This partnership ensured that reading materials were consistently available even outside formal library visits.

### **2.4. Parental Involvement**

The school encouraged parents to support literacy at home through the *Home Reading Program*, in which students brought home one library book each week to read with their parents. Parents were asked to sign a simple reading log after shared reading sessions. This activity strengthened home–school collaboration and extended literacy learning beyond the classroom. Parents' involvement also reinforced the Islamic value of *ta'lim wa tarbiyah* (education and nurturing) as a collective family responsibility.

## **Integration of Library Programs in Nurturing Reading Culture**

### **3.1. Literacy-Based Activities**

SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta implemented various literacy-based programs coordinated through the library. The most prominent initiative was the **"Gemar Baca Buku" (Love-to-Read)** program, conducted once a week for each grade

level. During these sessions, students read books of their choice for 45 minutes, followed by short peer discussions guided by teachers or the librarian.

In addition, the library hosted monthly events such as *Storytelling Fridays* and *Book Exhibitions*, where students presented book reviews or dramatized story excerpts. These activities transformed reading into a social event, boosting students' confidence and communication skills. Attendance records showed consistent participation, with an average of 85% of students joining voluntarily.

### **3.2. Monitoring and Evaluation of Reading Habits**

The librarian maintained a **borrower logbook** and a **digital record system** to track students' reading progress. Data from the first semester of 2024 showed a 40% increase in book borrowing compared to the same period in 2023. Teachers also noted improvements in reading fluency and comprehension, particularly among lower-grade students. The combination of structured programs and informal reading opportunities contributed to measurable growth in students' engagement with reading materials.

### **3.3. Integration of Religious and Moral Themes**

An essential feature of literacy programs in SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta was the integration of Islamic values into reading activities. The library provided thematic reading lists linked to Islamic morals such as honesty (*sidq*), patience (*sabr*), and kindness (*ihsan*). Teachers encouraged students to reflect on these values through guided questions after reading sessions. One teacher remarked, *"When students read stories about the Prophet's honesty or kindness, they learn not only the language but also the meaning behind it."* This integration of moral content made reading literacy relevant to the students' spiritual development and supported the school's mission of holistic education.

### **3.4. Outcomes Observed**

The combination of friendly management, collaborative engagement, and value-based reading resulted in notable behavioral changes among students. Observation and interview data showed that:

- Students became more proactive in borrowing books without teacher instruction.
- Library visits during recess increased by approximately 50% compared to the previous academic year.
- Students demonstrated improved concentration and enthusiasm during reading sessions.
- Teachers and parents reported that children began discussing book content at home.

These outcomes suggest that a child-friendly library environment, when supported by effective management and community collaboration, can substantially enhance reading motivation and literacy skills in Islamic elementary education settings.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of child-friendly library management at SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta has significantly contributed to the development of students' reading literacy. This success was achieved through the integration of three interrelated components: the management of the physical environment, collaboration among school personnel, and the embedding of literacy-based programs aligned with Islamic educational values. These findings both support and extend prior research on school library management and

literacy education, highlighting the contextual factors that make the approach particularly effective in Islamic elementary settings.

### 1. Library Management and Physical Environment

The first major finding—relating to the physical layout, accessibility, and atmosphere of the library—confirms the argument that environmental design plays a decisive role in children’s motivation to read. This aligns with Murdowo et al. (2020), who found that vibrant colors, flexible seating, and thematic decorations increased children’s willingness to visit and read in a library setting. Similarly, UNICEF (2017) emphasized that a child-friendly learning space should foster safety, comfort, and ownership, enabling children to explore knowledge freely. In SD Al-Firdaus, the combination of bright colors, cozy reading corners, and accessible shelving created a space that students perceived as enjoyable and emotionally secure.

These results also resonate with Clark and Teravainen-Goff (2020), who reported that children’s positive emotional attachment to a reading environment correlates strongly with reading engagement and frequency. The peaceful ambiance, supported by elements of Islamic identity such as calligraphy and prayer spaces, extended this attachment by creating a culturally meaningful reading environment. Unlike some secular contexts described by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), where reading motivation depends primarily on cognitive and social stimulation, the library at SD Al-Firdaus leveraged both **spiritual and affective dimensions** of motivation. This difference underscores that child-friendly design in Islamic education settings must integrate cultural-religious values to strengthen the affective bond between children and books.

However, while previous studies (e.g., Supriati, 2021) highlighted the lack of infrastructure as a major barrier to literacy culture, this study demonstrates that with adequate planning and stakeholder commitment, even schools with modest resources can achieve significant improvement through incremental innovations such as thematic layouts, restructured seating, and digital library integration. The results therefore extend earlier findings by showing that **management creativity** can compensate for material limitations in promoting a literacy-rich environment.

### 2. Human Resource Collaboration in Supporting Literacy

The second major finding pertains to the collaborative roles of principals, teachers, librarians, and parents in supporting library management. This reinforces the view of Ardiansyah (2020) and Silvana and Setiani (2018) that library services become more effective when teachers and librarians work as partners in learning rather than operating in isolation. The collaborative structure observed in SD Al-Firdaus—manifested through the *School Literacy Committee* and integrated scheduling—reflects what Boelens (2007) described as **knowledge management within educational institutions**, where librarians act as facilitators connecting students, teachers, and information resources.

Moreover, the principal’s active leadership in policy and budgeting corresponds with Suhardini (2011) and Mansyur (2015), who asserted that the principal’s managerial commitment determines the sustainability of literacy initiatives. In this study, the principal’s decision to institutionalize weekly library visits and allocate dedicated time for reading embedded literacy into the school’s culture rather than treating it as an extracurricular activity. This structural

integration strengthens the continuity of literacy programs—a factor that earlier studies (Luthfiyah, 2015; Nashruddin, 2016) identified as often missing in less coordinated schools.

The librarian's role as both a service provider and a motivator also mirrors findings from Oyewo (2012), who emphasized that librarians in primary schools serve as critical agents in shaping reading habits by curating relevant materials and guiding children's exploration. The *reading challenge program* at SD Al-Firdaus demonstrated how librarians could adopt **gamification principles** to sustain students' engagement—an innovation not reported in earlier Indonesian studies but increasingly recognized in international contexts (OECD, 2019).

Additionally, the teachers' incorporation of expressive reading activities, such as drawing-based reflections, aligns with the child-centered literacy model proposed by UNESCO (2020). These methods promote comprehension through creative engagement, which is particularly relevant for young learners who may struggle with abstract summarization. The success of such practices suggests that literacy in Islamic elementary education thrives when reading is linked not only to language outcomes but also to emotional and moral expression.

Interestingly, parental involvement in the *Home Reading Program* extends previous studies (Yuliana & Mardiyana, 2021; Kholisa & Ramadhanissholihah, 2024) that called for family-based literacy reinforcement. In the present study, shared reading between parents and children not only improved reading frequency but also reinforced Islamic family values of shared learning (*ta'lim wa tarbiyah*). This integration of moral and educational goals differentiates the findings from secular studies, implying that literacy in Islamic contexts functions as both **a cognitive and ethical practice**.

### 3. Integration of Library Programs in Nurturing Reading Culture

The third key finding—the implementation of structured literacy programs—supports the idea that sustained and varied reading activities foster deeper literacy engagement. The “Gemar Baca Buku” program and storytelling sessions reflect what Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) described as *socially mediated motivation*, where peer interaction and recognition enhance intrinsic interest in reading. These programs' success, indicated by increased library visits and borrowing rates, also validates Supriati's (2021) assertion that school-wide literacy initiatives are more effective than sporadic activities led by individual teachers.

However, this study expands on prior research by demonstrating that **value-based literacy programs**—those that integrate moral or spiritual reflection—can further deepen comprehension and empathy. When students read stories emphasizing virtues like honesty or kindness and then relate them to Islamic teachings, they not only process textual meaning but also engage in moral reasoning. This finding corresponds with Nashruddin (2016), who suggested that the integration of ethical themes in children's reading materials enhances both literacy and character development.

From a management perspective, the systematic monitoring of reading habits through digital logbooks also supports findings from Purwadi et al. (2021), who observed that digitalization improves efficiency and record-keeping in school libraries. Yet, in contrast to their study—which emphasized technological convenience—this research found that technology served primarily as a **complementary enabler** rather than the central driver of literacy engagement.

The human elements—friendly librarians, cooperative teachers, and motivating peers—remained the strongest determinants of sustained reading culture.

#### 4. Divergences and Explanations

While most findings align with previous studies, certain divergences were observed. For example, Ardiansyah (2020) argued that library service quality alone can determine reading interest, but in this study, service quality was necessary yet insufficient without parallel emotional and cultural support. Students' enthusiasm was highest when reading was contextualized through culturally and spiritually meaningful activities. This divergence suggests that in faith-based schools, literacy motivation cannot be fully explained through service efficiency alone; it must also include **affective and identity-based engagement**.

Similarly, OECD (2019) highlighted that digital libraries increase access but may reduce deep reading time due to screen distraction. In contrast, the digital library at SD Al-Firdaus enhanced access without diminishing reading focus, likely because digital usage was guided by teachers and integrated with physical reading tasks. This indicates that **teacher mediation** mitigates potential drawbacks of technology, a finding that adds nuance to global debates on digital literacy integration.

Another divergence lies in the interpretation of space. Whereas previous research (Murdowo et al., 2020) treated spatial design as a physical determinant of comfort, this study suggests that spatial design also carries **symbolic meaning**. The presence of calligraphy, prayer corners, and moral quotations transformed the library into a site of both cognitive and spiritual reflection, offering students a holistic reading experience that connects learning with faith.

#### 5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings reinforce the notion that child-friendly library management operates effectively when guided by **ecological and sociocultural principles** (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). The library functions as a cultural tool that mediates students' engagement with knowledge through social interaction, environmental design, and institutional norms. In Islamic elementary education, this mediation extends beyond cognition to include moral formation, making literacy both an academic and spiritual endeavor.

Practically, the study underscores the need for **capacity building among teacher-librarians** to design inclusive literacy environments, particularly in religious schools where curriculum integration requires sensitivity to moral narratives. Furthermore, the success of the *Gemar Baca Buku* and *Home Reading* programs highlights the importance of aligning school-based initiatives with family participation—an approach that could inform national literacy policy frameworks.

### CONCLUSION

This study examined how child-friendly library management strengthens reading literacy in Islamic elementary education, focusing on SD Al-Firdaus Surakarta. The findings show that when the library is managed as a welcoming, value-oriented learning environment—supported by collaborative human resources and integrated literacy programs—it can significantly enhance students' reading engagement. The library functioned not merely as a facility but as a cultural and spiritual hub that nurtured children's curiosity, emotional security, and moral reflection.

The novelty of this research lies in contextualizing the **child-friendly library model** within an Islamic school framework. It extends previous studies by demonstrating that global child-centered principles can be localized through Islamic moral and aesthetic values. This integration produces a holistic form of literacy—combining cognitive, affective, and ethical dimensions—that has not been sufficiently explored in prior research. The study also contributes methodologically by using a qualitative case approach that captures how managerial, pedagogical, and community factors interact to sustain literacy practices.

Despite its strengths, the study has limitations. The single-case design restricts generalization, and the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias. Future research could include multiple schools and use longitudinal or quantitative methods to examine the long-term effects of library management on literacy performance. Expanding this inquiry to other educational levels may also provide insights into literacy continuity across age groups.

In practical terms, the study underscores the need for school leaders to prioritize library development as a central component of literacy reform. Training teacher-librarians, improving spatial design, and maintaining collaboration among teachers, students, and parents are key to sustaining a culture of reading. For policymakers, the findings suggest that child-friendly and culturally responsive management models can enhance literacy in faith-based schools without undermining their religious identity.

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