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The Role of Journalism Extracurricular Activities in Sustaining The School Literacy Movement During Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examines how a school journalism extracurricular program supported the Indonesian School Literacy Movement during COVID-19 restrictions. The study was conducted at SMK S3 Idhata Curup, Bengkulu, in the 2021/2022 academic year. Participants included the journalism club adviser, student leaders and members, and selected Grade X teachers. Data were gathered through questionnaires distributed via WhatsApp, interviews, and field observations. Three activity strands—creative and nonfiction writing, broadcasting, and cinematography—provided opportunities for students to produce and disseminate literacy-related content through classroom displays and online channels. The source manuscript documents seven journalism-related competition achievements and reports that many club members ranked among the top ten students in their classes. These observations indicate that the club functioned as a student-led literacy promoter and maintained opportunities for participation despite pandemic disruptions. However, the available data do not establish a statistical correlation or a causal effect on academic achievement. The study highlights the practical value of integrating student media production with school literacy initiatives while identifying the need for more systematic outcome assessment.

Keywords: extracurricular journalism; School Literacy Movement; digital literacy; student media; COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

School closures and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted both formal instruction and co-curricular participation. Emergency remote teaching differed from deliberately designed online learning and required schools to adapt learning opportunities under severe constraints (Bond, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2020; Zimmerman, 2002). In this setting, the Indonesian School Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Sekolah, GLS) faced a particular challenge: sustaining reading, writing, speaking, and media-production practices when routine classroom and school-based activities were interrupted.

Literacy is no longer limited to decoding printed text. Contemporary literacy includes the ability to interpret multimodal messages, evaluate digital information, communicate ethically, and participate in networked publics (Buckingham, 2007; Coiro, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Hobbs, 2011; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Kellner & Share, 2007; Mills, 2010; Pangrazio, 2016). Journalism clubs

are potentially relevant to these goals because reporting, interviewing, editing, and publishing require purposeful reading and writing for authentic audiences.

At SMK S3 Idhata Curup in Bengkulu, the student journalism club, Jurnalistik of Smekta, continued operating while many other extracurricular activities were suspended. Its activities were organized around class writing, broadcasting, and cinematography. The present study addresses one question: How did this journalism extracurricular program contribute to the School Literacy Movement during COVID-19 restrictions? The contribution is a context-specific account of the program's practices and perceived roles, rather than an experimental estimate of its effects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School Literacy Movement and Contemporary Literacy

The School Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Sekolah, GLS) can be understood as a school-wide effort to cultivate sustained literacy practices rather than treating literacy as an isolated classroom skill. In contemporary educational contexts, literacy extends beyond conventional reading and writing to include multimodal interpretation, digital participation, information evaluation, and ethical communication. New Literacy Studies and multiliteracies perspectives emphasize that literacy practices are socially situated and increasingly mediated by digital technologies (Street, 2003; Mills, 2010; Rowsell & Walsh, 2011). Similarly, media-literacy scholarship stresses the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and communicate messages across media environments (Buckingham, 2007; Hobbs, 2011; Kellner & Share, 2007). For school-based literacy initiatives, this broader conception is important because students increasingly encounter information through websites, social media, video, and other networked formats.

Journalism Extracurricular Activities as Authentic Literacy Practice

Extracurricular activities can provide developmental contexts in which students build engagement, social competence, identity, and school attachment (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks et al., 2004; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Durlak et al., 2010). Journalism is particularly relevant to literacy because its core practices—identifying topics, gathering information, interviewing, drafting, revising, editing, presenting, and publishing—require students to use language for authentic purposes and audiences. Writing research indicates that purposeful writing instruction and opportunities to compose extended texts can strengthen adolescents' writing development (Graham & Perin, 2007). Within a journalism club, these practices are not confined to print. Broadcasting and cinematography also require oral communication, scriptwriting, visual composition, and collaborative production, thereby connecting conventional literacy with multimodal literacy (Hull & Katz, 2006; Walsh, 2010). Thus, extracurricular journalism can operate as a practical extension of school literacy by positioning students as producers of meaningful texts and media.

Digital and Media Literacy in Student Journalism

The expansion of student publication into digital spaces increases both opportunities and responsibilities. Online environments enable students to publish school news, creative writing, videos, and other content for audiences beyond the classroom, linking formal and informal learning practices (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). At the same time, digital participation requires more than technical access. Students must be able to search for information, evaluate the credibility of online sources, distinguish reliable claims from misinformation, and communicate responsibly (Coiro, 2011; McGrew et al., 2018; McGrew & Byrne, 2020; Pangrazio, 2016). Media production therefore has educational value when it is accompanied by editorial guidance, verification practices, and critical reflection. These competencies are especially relevant to journalism activities because students are expected not only to consume information but also to select, interpret, and redistribute it through school media.

Student Engagement and Literacy During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the importance of digitally mediated literacy practices. Emergency remote education was implemented under conditions substantially different from intentionally designed online learning, creating challenges for participation, interaction, and continuity of school activities (Hodges et al., 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020; Bond, 2021). Research on student engagement suggests that meaningful participation depends on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in learning activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). Extracurricular programs capable of moving between online and limited face-to-face formats could therefore provide additional spaces for students to remain connected to school communities. Journalism activities are particularly adaptable because writing, editing, reporting, broadcasting, and digital publication can be coordinated through online communication tools. Nevertheless, access to devices and platforms does not automatically produce strong literacy outcomes; differences in digital skills and patterns of technology use remain important considerations (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014).

Conceptual Synthesis and Research Gap

Taken together, the literature suggests that extracurricular journalism sits at the intersection of school literacy, student engagement, digital literacy, and participatory media production. Existing scholarship provides substantial evidence on extracurricular participation, writing development, media literacy, and digital learning, but these strands are often examined separately. Less attention has been given to how a school journalism club can integrate writing, broadcasting, cinematography, and digital publication to sustain a School Literacy Movement during a period of severe disruption. The present study addresses this

contextual gap by examining the practices and perceived contributions of the journalism extracurricular program at SMK S3 Idhata Curup during COVID-19 restrictions. Consistent with the qualitative evidence available in the source manuscript, the study focuses on the program's roles and practices rather than claiming causal effects on literacy achievement or academic performance.

METHOD

Design, Setting, and Participants

The study used a qualitative case-study approach at SMK S3 Idhata Curup, Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu Province, Indonesia, during the 2021/2022 academic year. The original report identifies the club adviser, student officers and members, and several teachers teaching Grade X as information sources. It does not state the number of participants, sampling criteria, interview duration, or response rate; consequently, no such details are inferred here.

Data Collection and Analysis

The author distributed short questionnaires through WhatsApp groups and conducted interviews with the club adviser and core officers, supplemented by field observation. Questions addressed motivations for participation, perceived benefits and difficulties, student contributions, and connections with classroom learning. This article presents a descriptive thematic organization of the evidence already reported in the source manuscript; it does not claim that an independently documented coding protocol, inter-rater agreement, or statistical test was performed. The source's list of competition achievements is reproduced in aggregated form to preserve the reported evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Continuity of Literacy Activities During Restricted Schooling

Participants described the journalism club as one of the extracurricular groups able to continue activities through digital tools when face-to-face meetings were restricted. Online work was complemented by occasional limited in-person meetings for tasks requiring direct coordination. The program offered a means of maintaining student participation and countering the monotony of remote schooling. This interpretation is consistent with literature on student engagement, extracurricular participation, and social development (Durlak et al., 2010; Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Fredricks & Eccles, 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Knifsend & Graham, 2012; Potter, 2010; Rowsell & Walsh, 2011; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

Three Complementary Production Divisions

The club organized its activities into three divisions. The following table retains the original program categories and tasks while translating the descriptions into English.

Table 1.

Division	Activities reported in the original manuscript
Class Writing	Fiction (short stories, poetry, novels); nonfiction (articles and scientific writing); classroom and school bulletin boards; electronic bulletin boards.
Broadcasting	Journalism and communication fundamentals; news and feature writing; presenting; reporting school activities; publishing school news and student achievements on online channels.
Cinematography	Filmmaking and acting fundamentals; scriptwriting; film production and editing.

The three strands connect textual composition, oral communication, and multimodal expression. Research on adolescent writing instruction, digital storytelling, multimodal literacy, and participatory media provides a conceptual basis for understanding why these activities may broaden literacy opportunities (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Hull & Katz, 2006; Jones & Mitchell, 2016; Siddiq et al., 2016; Walsh, 2010; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Importantly, the source does not report standardized literacy tests; therefore, these connections describe plausible educational affordances rather than measured learning gains.

Student-Led Literacy Promotion Across Physical and Digital Spaces

Club members contributed poems, short stories, biographies, advice columns, and articles to school displays and expanded their publication activity to school websites and social media. They also documented school events and student achievements through written reports and presenter-style video content. These practices positioned students as content producers and distributors rather than passive recipients. Research on social-media-supported learning, civic online reasoning, and media literacy emphasizes the need to combine production skills with source evaluation and responsible communication (Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Kahu, 2013; Livingstone, 2004; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; McGrew et al., 2018; McGrew & Byrne, 2020; Siddiq & Scherer, 2019; Street, 2003; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014; Hodges et al., 2020; Kuh, 2009; Lazer et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

Documented Competition Achievements

The source provides seven competition achievements during 2021–2022. The entries are retained below without using student names, since personal identification is not necessary for the article's analytical purpose.

Table 2.

Year	Competition / achievement	Level
2022	First place, FLS2N monologue	Provincial
2022	First place, university speech contest	Provincial
2022	First place, Islamic banking student association essay contest	National
2022	Second place, Islamic banking student association essay contest	National
2021	First place, digital talent competition	Provincial
2021	First place, short-story writing competition	National
2021	First place, Islamic poetry writing and reading contest	National

Source: Competition list reported in the original article (2021/2022). These are descriptive accomplishments; without a comparison group or longitudinal baseline, they cannot establish that participation caused the awards.

Perceived Links to Classroom Achievement

The original report states that many journalism club members were ranked within the top ten of their respective classes, based on questionnaire responses and informal confirmation from teachers. The source does not provide individual grades, the total number of club members, a comparison group, or correlation coefficients. Thus, its wording about a "positive correlation" should be read as a perceived positive association, not as a statistically demonstrated relationship. Prior scholarship suggests that extracurricular participation and academic engagement can be related, but these associations vary by context and activity intensity (Bond, 2020; Bond et al., 2020; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021; Seow & Pan, 2014; Bond, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2020; Zimmerman, 2002).

Implications for the School Literacy Movement

The case illustrates how student media can connect school literacy with meaningful publication tasks, digital participation, and collaborative production. A sustainable program would integrate editorial mentoring, verification of sources, inclusive access to devices, and periodic assessment of student-produced work. Research on online reading comprehension and digital inequality suggests that access alone is insufficient: students also require explicit instruction in information evaluation and opportunities to develop higher-order digital competencies (Coiro, 2011; Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Hobbs, 2011; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; McGrew et al., 2018; McGrew & Byrne, 2020; Mills, 2010; Siddiq & Scherer, 2019; Street, 2003; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014).

The interpretation also draws on related evidence concerning journalism education, student agency, media evaluation, and self-regulated learning (Apriliyandari & Imron, 2014; Ashari, 2019; Buckingham, 2007; Graham & Perin, 2007; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Jones & Mitchell, 2016; Kellner & Share, 2007;

Pangrazio, 2016; Siddiq et al., 2016; Walsh, 2010; Kahne et al., 2012; Mihailidis, 2014; Pennycook et al., 2020).

Limitations

This single-school qualitative account has several limitations. The source does not disclose sample size, recruitment procedures, instrument items, response distributions, interview transcripts, or an audit trail for thematic analysis. Seven awards and anecdotal classroom rankings are descriptive indicators, not direct measures of literacy improvement. No inferential correlation analysis was reported. The study also concerns the specific conditions of the 2021/2022 pandemic period; the transferability of the findings to other schools or later periods requires further investigation.

CONCLUSION

The journalism extracurricular program at SMK S3 Idhata Curup helped sustain the School Literacy Movement during COVID-19 restrictions by maintaining writing, broadcasting, and filmmaking activities, publishing student work in offline and digital formats, and encouraging peer-led participation. The source documents seven competition achievements and reports favorable perceptions of members' classroom engagement. These findings support the practical potential of school journalism as a literacy-enrichment strategy, while not establishing causal improvements in literacy or academic performance. Schools should support supervised student publishing, digital media literacy instruction, equitable participation, and systematic evaluation of learning outcomes.

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