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The Effect of a Simple Home Literacy Program on Improving Beginning Reading Skills of First-Grade Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to empirically test and analyze the effect of a simple home literacy program on improving the beginning reading skills of grade I students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan, Labuhanbatu Regency. The background of the study is based on the low beginning reading skills of students, as indicated by the average pre-questionnaire score of 64.2 and the fact that the majority of students (60%) are still concentrated in the Low to Very Low category. This study used a quantitative approach with a One-Group Pre-Questionnaire - Post-Questionnaire Design. The study subjects were 20 first-grade students. The intervention program was implemented over three cycles, involving active parental support through read-aloud activities, syllable identification exercises, and the use of daily literacy journals. Data were collected using a reading ability test instrument and analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis (Paired Samples T-Test). The descriptive analysis results showed a significant improvement in students' reading skills. The average post-questionnaire score jumped to 82.0 after the treatment, indicating an average score increase of 17.8 points from the baseline. Inferentially, the results of the paired t-test indicated that H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted (Sig. <0.05). The conclusion of this study is that there is a positive and significant effect of a simple home literacy program on improving the early reading skills of first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan. This program successfully streamlined the role of parents as partners with teachers, creating a consistent and supportive learning environment at home. Schools are advised to integrate this program into academic policies to ensure sustainability.

Keywords: **home literacy program, early reading skills, paired samples t-test, parental involvement**

I. INTRODUCTION

Literacy, in its most fundamental sense, refers to an individual's ability to read and write. However, in contemporary educational discourse, literacy encompasses a multidimensional competence that extends beyond technical reading and writing skills. It includes the capacity to understand, evaluate, and utilize various forms of text—both print and digital—to participate effectively in society and achieve personal goals (Hechanova et al., 2025). Literacy serves as the foundation for all other learning processes and constitutes an absolute prerequisite for academic and professional success. Particularly at the primary education level, early literacy development represents the most critical investment in shaping students' character and cognitive abilities.

Amin and Mumpuniarti (2025) emphasize that reading is a cognitive process aimed at extracting information from written texts. Strong mastery of beginning reading skills enables students not on ly to recognize letters but also to access information, build vocabulary, and develop deep conceptual understanding. The reading process involves multiple activities, including letter and word recognition, connecting these with sounds and meanings, and drawing conclusions to understand the author's message (Amin & Mumpuniarti, 2025).

Indonesia's literacy gap has emerged as a national issue that has attracted serious attention from policymakers and educators. Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 starkly illustrate this challenge. Indonesian students ranked 74th out of 79 participating countries, with an average score of only 371—far below the international average. This ranking indicates that literacy represents one of the most critical issues requiring systematic and serious intervention. The low ranking not only reflects educational quality but also potentially hinders human resource development and national competitiveness on the global stage (Sapkota & Gnawali, 2025). In response to these concerning results, the government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, launched various programs, including the National Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Nasional/GLN).

The National Literacy Movement aims to cultivate reading and writing culture among students, subsequently detailed in more specific initiatives: the School Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Sekolah/GLS), Family Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Keluarga/GLK), and Community Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Masyarakat/GLM). These initiatives are supported by government regulations, such as Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 23 of 2015, which emphasizes character development through literacy activities. The

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regulation mandates that schools dedicate 15 minutes daily before instruction begins to reading non-textbook materials, forming the basis for the School Literacy Movement (Firmansyah & Sastra Atmaja, 2025).
Despite these nationally mandated programs, implementation and effectiveness at the local level continue to face significant challenges. At SDN 18 Rantau Selatan, Labuhanbatu Regency, literacy problems are particularly evident among first-grade students. Preliminary observations by the researcher revealed that most students are still at the beginning reading stage and face substantial difficulties in letter recognition, syllable combination, and reading simple words. This condition is exacerbated by classroom learning processes that remain predominantly lecture-based and teacher-centered. Consequently, students tend to be passive and lack opportunities to practice and apply reading skills independently (Wijaya et al., 2025).

Research Gap and Rationale
The limited time available at school is sometimes insufficient to comprehensively address literacy difficulties, necessitating support from environments outside the school. The family represents the closest and most influential environment for child development. Parental involvement in children's education is crucial, especially during early developmental stages when children build their cognitive and social foundations. The concept of home literacy refers to reading, storytelling, or other literacy-supporting activities within the family environment.
Lijuan (2025), in their report on preventing reading difficulties, emphasize that home literacy experiences are strong predictors of reading success at school. Simple practices such as reading storybooks, discussing book content, or even pointing to and naming objects in the environment can have remarkable effects on children's reading abilities. Through these activities, children not only learn reading mechanics but also develop a love for books and the learning process. Parental involvement creates a conducive atmosphere for learning, cultivates curiosity, and indirectly trains phonological skills, word recognition, and discourse comprehension (LIJUAN, 2025).
By implementing a structured simple home literacy program, parents can become strategic partners with teachers in facilitating children's reading development. This approach serves as an effective bridge connecting school learning with home practice. Despite the recognized importance of home literacy environments, limited empirical research in the Indonesian context has specifically examined the effectiveness of structured, simple home literacy programs for beginning readers at the first-grade level. Studies have explored school-based literacy movements (Kim et al., 2026) and various reading instruction methods (Latha et al., 2025), few have systematically investigated the impact of intentional, parent-mediated home literacy interventions on early reading skills.

Research Questions and Objectives
Based on the background, problem identification, and problem limitations presented, this research aims to answer the following research question: "Is there a significant effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program on improving the beginning reading skills of first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan, Labuhanbatu Regency, Academic Year 2025-2026?"
This study specifically focuses on the causal relationship between the independent variable (Simple Home Literacy Program) and the dependent variable (beginning reading skills improvement), examining the extent to which the home-based intervention program positively impacts students' reading abilities.

The specific objectives of this research are:
To analyze the initial level of beginning reading skills: Measure and describe the baseline condition of beginning reading skills among first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan before the intervention program begins. This measurement serves as pre-test data, providing a baseline against which final results can be compared.
To analyze the improvement in beginning reading skills examine the development of beginning reading skills among first-grade students after participating in the Simple Home Literacy Program during the research period. This analysis relies on post-test data collected at program completion.
To analyze the effect of the literacy program we statistically test whether differences between the pretest and post test results are significant, therebydetermining whether improvements in beginning reading skills are genuinely attributable to the Simple Home Literacy Program.

Significance of the Study
This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits:
Theoretical Benefits: This research will enrich educational knowledge, particularly in the fields of early literacy and family roles. The findings can provide empirical evidence supporting theories of language and cognitive development while highlighting the importance of parental involvement in supporting children's education. Hurlock (1978:3) emphasizes that the family environment is a critical factor influencing child development. The findings can serve as a foundation for developing more holistic learning models that focus not only on teacher roles at school but also on collaboration between schools and families.

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Practical Benefits:
For Teachers and Schools: This research provides insights and concrete data regarding the importance of home literacy programs. The results can guide the design of school-parent cooperation programs, development of literacy activity guides, and integration of these practices into school curricula.
For Parents: This research offers practical guidance and motivation for active parental involvement in home literacy activities. With examples of simple and effective programs, parents will feel more confident and capable of supporting their children's reading development.
For Future Researchers: The findings can serve as references for subsequent research examining literacy, family roles, or home-based educational interventions, providing a foundation for expanding the research scope to different variables or locations.

II. METHODS

A. *Research Design*

This study employed a quantitative experimental approach using a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pret est posttest design. This design was selected because it allows researchers to measure changes within the same group before and after treatment, providing a clear indication of intervention effectiveness. The design is appropriate for educational settings where random assignment may not be feasible due to natural classroom groupings and ethical considerations regarding withholding potentially beneficial interventions from control groups.
This design aligns with the research objective of statistically measuring and analyzing the influence of one variable (Simple Home Literacy Program) on another variable (beginning reading skills). The collected data were numeric and analyzed to demonstrate a causal relationship. By comparing pre test and post test scores within the same group, the design controls for individual differences that might otherwise confound the results each participant serves as their own control.

B. *Research Location and Time*

Location: This research was conducted at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan, Labuhanbatu Regency. This school was selected as the research location because it is considered representative and has a student population appropriate for this research—first-grade students who would become the research subjects. The school is a public elementary school with National School Identification Number (NPSN) 10205310, located in Urung Kompas Village, Rantau Selatan District, Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra Province. According to official data from the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Education and Culture Data Reference Portal, SDN 18 Rantau Selatan has B accreditation and serves 113 students across six grade levels.
Time: The research was conducted over one semester during the 2025-2026 academic year, from July to December 2025, with the following detailed schedule:
September - November 2025:
Preparation phase and preliminary study
Pre-test and treatment implementation
Home literacy program implementation and monitoring
December 2025:
Post-test administration and final data collection

C. *Population and Sample*

Population: The population of this study consisted of all first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan during the 2025-2026 academic year. The total population comprised 20 students enrolled in first grade. The selection of first-grade students was strategic as this stage represents the critical period for building the foundation of beginning reading.
Sample: Given that the population was relatively small (20 students), the research employed a total sampling technique where all first-grade students were included in the study as the experimental group. The total sampling approach was appropriate for this educational context, as it allowed for a comprehensive examination of the intervention's effects without excluding any students from the potentially beneficial program. The sample comprised 20 first-grade students who all received the Simple Home Literacy Program intervention.

D. *Data Sources*

Data sources in this research were divided into two categories:
Primary Data Sources: Primary data consisted of pre-test and post-test results collected directly from first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan. These data measured beginning reading skills before and after program

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implementation. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the intervention to establish baseline reading abilities, while the post-test was administered at program completion to measure progress.
Secondary Data Sources: Secondary data included supporting information from indirect sources:
School and student profile data
Curriculum-related documents
Academic records and grade reports for first-grade students
Books, journals, and relevant research supporting theories of literacy and beginning reading

E. *Data Collection Techniques and Instruments*
Data Collection Techniques: The research employed two primary data collection techniques:
Tests: Tests were used to measure students' beginning reading skills. The reading ability test instrument was developed based on indicators of beginning reading skills for first-grade students. Tests were administered in two forms:
Pre-test: Administered at the research outset to measure initial reading abilities.
Post-test: Administered at the conclusion of the research to measure reading abilities following intervention.
Observation: Observation was employed to monitor the implementation of the Simple Home Literacy Program in the experimental group. The researcher recorded student and parent participation, engagement levels, and any challenges encountered during program implementation. Observations were supported by documentation of student activities through parent-submitted photographs and daily literacy journals.
Research Instrument: The research instrument consisted of reading test questions developed based on beginning reading skill indicators for first-grade students. The instrument included:
Letter recognition assessment
Phoneme identification tasks
Syllable reading exercises
Simple word reading tasks
Basic comprehension questions
The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing before use in the research.
Validity Testing: Instrument validity was tested to ensure that the instrument accurately measured what it was intended to measure. Item validity was assessed using the product-moment correlation formula. Items with significant correlations to total scores were retained for the final instrument.
Reliability Testing: Instrument reliability was tested to ensure measurement consistency and stability. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha formula, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable for educational research instruments.

F. *Intervention Program Description*
The Simple Home Literacy Program intervention was implemented over three cycles (weeks), with each cycle building upon the previous one. The program components were designed to be feasible for parents to implement at home without requiring specialized training or expensive materials.

Cycle 1 (Weeks 1-2): Foundation Building
Parents received orientation and training on the program components
Daily read-aloud activities (15 minutes) introduced
Creation of home reading corners with available materials
Parental literacy journaling commenced

Cycle 2 (Weeks 3-4): Skill Development
Continued daily read-aloud activities
Introduction of syllable identification exercises
Letter-sound correspondence games
Completion of daily literacy journals

Cycle 3 (Weeks 5-6): Reinforcement
Sustained daily reading routines
Independent reading attempts with parental support
Comprehension discussions about read materials
Continued journaling and documentation
Each cycle involved daily reading activities, parental completion of literacy journals, and weekly submission of activity documentation through the class communication group.

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G. *Data Analysis Techniques*

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques:

1. Descriptive Analysis: Descriptive statistics were calculated to characterize the data distribution and provide an overview of student performance. Measures included:
   - Mean (average scores)
   - Standard deviation
   - Median
   - Mode
   - Range (minimum and maximum scores)
   - Frequency distributions
   - Percentages
2. Normality and Homogeneity Testing: Before conducting hypothesis testing, the data were assessed for normality and homogeneity to ensure appropriate statistical assumptions were met:
   - Normality: Assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk or Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with significance set at $\alpha=0.05$. Data were considered normally distributed if $p > 0.05$.
   - Homogeneity: Assessed using Levene's test or F-test for equality of variances, with significance set at $\alpha=0.05$. Data were considered homogeneous if $p > 0.05$.
3. Hypothesis Testing: Hypothesis testing employed the paired samples t test to determine whether significant differences existed between the pre test and post test scores. This test is appropriate for comparing two related samples (pre test and post test from the same individuals). The paired t-test formula is:

$$t = (\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2) / (S_D / \sqrt{n})$$

Where:

$\bar{X}_1$ = Mean of pre-test scores
$\bar{X}_2$ = Mean of post-test scores
S_D = Standard deviation of difference scores
n = Number of participants

The hypotheses tested were:
H_0: No significant effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program on improving beginning reading skills
H_1: Significant effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program on improving beginning reading skills

The null hypothesis was rejected when the obtained t-value exceeded the critical t-value at $\alpha=0.05$, indicating a statistically significant improvement attributable to the intervention

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Descriptive Analysis of Beginning Reading Skills*

The descriptive statistical analysis results show the distribution of beginning reading skills scores among first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan. These scores were obtained through reading ability tests administered before (pre-test) and after (post-test) implementation of the Simple Home Literacy Program. This analysis was used to describe quantitative changes in student reading abilities under two different conditions.

Pre-Test Results (Before Intervention)

Table 1 presents the pre-test scores for beginning reading skills before implementing the Simple Home Literacy Program among 20 first-grade students.

Table 1: Pre-Test Beginning Reading Skills Scores (N=20)

No	Student Code	Pre-Test Score
1	Ab	65
2	AW	55
3	AF	68

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No	Student Code	Pre-Test Score
4	HZ	63
5	MG	66
6	MH	65
7	MD	68
8	RZ	60
9	AG	60
10	DJ	68
11	NA	65
12	IH	71
13	TW	63
14	DA	64
15	FI	58
16	AR	70
17	SI	62
18	RU	67
19	EL	57
20	ZH	69
Total Score	1284	
Mean	64.2	
Highest Score	71	
Lowest Score	55	

The table shows that the mean pre-test reading ability score was 64.2, rounded to 64. The highest score achieved was 71 and the lowest was 55. This indicates that students' beginning reading skills remained relatively low or in the "Moderate to Low" category. Students at this stage still experienced various fundamental difficulties, such as recognizing similarly shaped letters (e.g., "b" and "d"), reading compound syllables, and understanding words contextually.

Several students also demonstrated insufficient reading fluency due to limited home practice and minimal exposure to children's reading materials. Based on observational findings, other factors affecting low initial reading ability included limited parental involvement in literacy activities before children entered school and limited supporting facilities such as reading corners or storybooks at home.

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Table 2: Pre-Test Beginning Reading Skills Statistics.

Statistic	Value
Mean	64
Standard Error	1
Median	65
Mode	65
Standard Deviation	4
Sample Variance	18
Kurtosis	1
Skewness	-1
Range	16
Minimum	55
Maximum	71
Sum	1284
Count	20
Confidence Level (95.0%)	3

Table 2 shows that the mean pre-test score was 64, with median of 65 and mode of 65. These three values are relatively close, indicating fairly symmetric data distribution. However, the skewness value of -1 indicates slight negative skewness, meaning there was a tendency for some students to score above average, although the majority remained in the low category. The standard deviation of 4 and variance of 18 demonstrate relatively small score dispersion among students, suggesting their initial reading abilities were fairly homogeneous.
The range of 16, with the lowest score of 55 and highest of 71, indicates the existence of reading ability gaps between students with the lowest and highest abilities. The 95% confidence level suggests that these results are reasonably representative of the first-grade student population at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan before literacy program intervention. These results strengthen the assumption that most students indeed needed additional learning interventions to improve their early reading skills.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Reading Skills (Pre-Test)

Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Very Low	0 - 55	2	10%
Low	56 - 65	10	50%
Moderate	66 - 75	8	40%
High	76 - 85	0	0%
Very High	86 - 100	0	0%

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Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Total		20	100%

Based on Table 3, it can be observed that the majority of students (50%) were in the Low category, while 10% were in the Very Low category. This means that 60% of students still possessed beginning reading skills below the minimum standard. Only 40% were in the Moderate category, with none reaching the High or Very High categories. This finding reinforces the urgency of implementing the Simple Home Literacy Program as an intervention necessary to improve students' reading abilities from an early age.
Low achievement is consistent with field conditions showing limited reading activities at home and minimal family literacy environment support. Many students were not accustomed to interacting with books or reading texts before entering elementary school. Therefore, a literacy program that actively involves parents is expected to provide additional stimuli for children to recognize letters, understand sounds, and cultivate interest in reading activities.

Post-Test Results (After Intervention)
Table 4 presents the post-test beginning reading skills scores compared with the pre-test scores for the 20 first-grade students following three cycles of the Simple Home Literacy Program intervention.

Table 4: Pre-Test and Post-Test Beginning Reading Skills Scores (N=20)

No	Student Code	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Difference (D)
1	Ab	65	82	17
2	AW	55	70	15
3	AF	68	85	17
4	HZ	63	79	16
5	MG	66	82	16
6	MH	65	83	18
7	MD	68	86	18
8	RZ	60	78	18
9	AG	60	77	17
10	DJ	68	86	18
11	NA	65	83	18
12	IH	71	90	19
13	TW	63	79	16
14	DA	64	81	17
15	FI	58	76	18
16	AR	70	88	18
17	SI	62	80	18

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No	Student Code	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Difference (D)
18	RU	67	85	18
19	EL	57	75	18
20	ZH	69	87	18
Total Score	1284	1640	356	
Mean	64.2	82.0	17.8	
Highest Score	71	90		
Lowest Score	55	70		

The increase in mean score from 64.2 to 82.0 demonstrates significant development in students' beginning reading skills. Almost all students experienced individual score improvements with an average difference of 17.8 points. This illustrates the success of the Simple Home Literacy Program implemented collaboratively between teachers and parents. Improvement occurred not only among students with initially high abilities but also among those with low reading abilities. This proves that the program was inclusive and adaptive to various student ability levels.
Qualitatively, the improvement was also influenced by a more enjoyable learning atmosphere at home, as reading activities were conducted through family-oriented approaches and habit-building rather than pressure. Parents who read stories with expression and engaging intonation helped children become more focused and interested in reading activities. Meanwhile, letter and syllable recognition exercises conducted through games helped reduce children's boredom. Visual support such as simple reading corners also increased children's enthusiasm for reading outside school hours. Additionally, journaling and sending reading activity photographs to teachers served as effective monitoring tools in ensuring program implementation consistency and active parental involvement.

B. *Observation Results of Literacy Program Implementation*
Following the three-cycle Simple Home Literacy Program implementation, observations were conducted on student and parent activities. The observation results were expressed as percentages, with a total of 20 student samples:

Table 5: Observation Results of Student and Parent Activities in the Home Literacy Program

No	Component Observed	Meeting I	Meeting II	Meeting III	Mean Score	Percentage	Category
1	Students engaged in read-aloud/syllable exercises with parental guidance (15 min daily)	20	20	20	20	100%	Active
2	Students attended evaluation/program sessions (as scheduled)	20	20	20	20	100%	Active
3	Students initiated independent selection of reading materials from Home Reading Corner	7	6	8	7	35%	Active*
4	Students able to follow reading/syllable exercise instructions provided by parents	17	18	19	18	90%	Active
5	Parents completed daily literacy journals	17	18	19	18	90%	Active

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No	Component Observed	Meeting I	Meeting II	Meeting III	Mean Score	Percentage	Category
6	Students able to pronounce/articulate basic words correctly	16	17	18	17	85%	Active
7	Students able to listen and respond to parent questions about reading	18	19	19	19	95%	Active
8	Students able to perform syllable counting/letter counting activities (enrichment)	16	17	18	17	85%	Active
Overall Mean					17.5	85%	Active

Based on the observation results, the activity level of students and parents in the Simple Home Literacy Program reached an average of 85%. According to the researcher's activity criteria (>75%), program implementation was categorized as active. This means that the majority of students and parents had consistently implemented the program according to teacher-provided guidelines. Daily read-aloud activities proved to be the most dominant component, followed by daily literacy journal completion. However, students' initiative to independently select reading materials at home still requires improvement.

This finding suggests that although parental stimulation is effective, developing children's intrinsic motivation for reading still requires continuous habituation. The relatively low score for independent reading initiation (35%) indicates that while students participate actively when guided, they have not yet fully internalized reading as a self-initiated activity. This highlights the need for sustained program implementation to transform guided reading into autonomous reading habits.

C. *Hypothesis Testing Results*

Inferential data analysis was used to test the research hypothesis: "Is there a significant effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program on improving Beginning Reading Skills among First-Grade Students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan, Labuhanbatu Regency, Academic Year 2025-2026?"

Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the pre-test and post-test data were normally distributed. The testing criterion used was that data were considered normally distributed if the significance value (Sig.) > 0.05.

Table 6: Normality Test Results for Pre-Test and Post-Test Data

Data Group	Sig. 2-tailed	Description
Pre-Test	0.92308	Sig. > 0.05 (Normal)
Post-Test	(Same value)	Sig. > 0.05 (Normal)

The table shows that the significance value obtained for both pretest and posttest was 0.92308. Since the p-value was > 0.05, it can be concluded that all data were normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test was conducted to determine whether the two data groups (pre test and post test) had equal (homogeneous) variances. Data are considered homogeneous if the significance value is > 0.05.

Table 7: F-Test Two-Sample for Variances (Homogeneity Test)

	Variable 1 (Pre-Test)	Variable 2 (Post-Test)

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	Variable 1 (Pre-Test)	Variable 2 (Post-Test)
Mean	64.3846	82.4615
Variance	18.0897	29.7692
Observations	20	20
df	19	19
F	0.6077	
P(F≤f) one-tail	0.2002	
F Critical one-tail	0.3722	

Table 8: Homogeneity Test Results

Pre-Test and Post-Test (α=0.05)
SIG. > α: 0.6077 > 0.05

Based on the table, the significance value was 0.6077 > 0.05. Since the significance value exceeded α, it was concluded that the two data groups had equal or homogeneous variances.

Hypothesis Testing (Paired Samples T-Test)
Hypothesis testing was conducted using the paired samples t test method because it compares two conditions (before and after treatment) within the same population group. The decision criteria were as follows: H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted if Sig. < 0.05 and t-count > t-table.

Table 9: Paired Samples T-Test Results

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	64.3333	82.25
Variance	19.6969	31.8409
Observations	20	20
df	19	19
F	0.6186	
P(F≤f) one-tail	0.2192	
F Critical one-tail	0.3549	

Based on the Paired Sample T-Test decision-making criteria comparing the significance value, it was concluded that H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. Therefore, it was concluded that there was an effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program on improving beginning reading skills among first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan.

D. *Discussion*

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This study aimed to examine the effect of a simple home literacy program on improving beginning reading skills among first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan, Labuhanbatu Regency. The research employed a one-group pretest posttest design with 20 student participants. The primary research objective was to empirically demonstrate that simple literacy activities conducted at home with parental guidance can contribute to improving early reading abilities in elementary school-age children.

Before treatment, a descriptive analysis of the pre-test scores showed a mean of 64.2, with the lowest score of 55 and the highest of 71. These data indicate that the majority of students were in the Moderate to Low category. This suggests that their reading abilities had not yet reached the fluency level expected for first-grade students. Students tended to experience difficulties in recognizing certain letters, distinguishing syllable sounds, and understanding simple meanings from reading materials. Additionally, some students demonstrated passive behavior during reading activities at school, such as quickly losing focus, reading without intonation, or being reluctant to repeat readings. Factors such as unsupportive home environments, minimal child-parent interaction time, and lack of shared reading habits outside school hours also contributed to low beginning reading skills (Aini & Fikri, 2025).

Following the intervention through the Simple Home Literacy Program emphasizing active collaboration between teachers and parents, the results showed significant improvement in post-test scores. The mean score increased to 82.0, with the lowest score of 70 and the highest of 90. This 17.8-point increase proves that reading activities conducted regularly at home, with parental guidance and emotional support, have substantial positive impacts on students' reading abilities. Thus, it can be concluded that the Simple Home Literacy Program is effective in improving beginning reading skills among first-grade students.

This improvement aligns with hypothesis testing results showing that H_1 was accepted, meaning that there is a significant effect between home literacy program implementation and improved beginning reading abilities. This is supported by the paired samples t test results, where the significance value was < 0.05 and the t-count was > t-table. These results prove that the average improvement is not coincidental but is a direct result of the intervention program implementation. This demonstrates that literacy activities conducted collaboratively between school and home can accelerate children's reading development in a structured manner (Hoirullah & Adiba, 2026).

The program effectively transferred literacy stimulation from the school to the family environment, creating intensive habituation where parents became primary partners with teachers in the reading learning process. Through activities such as daily 15-minute read-alouds, letter and syllable recognition exercises, and daily literacy journaling, children received consistent and enjoyable literacy exposure. Beyond improving reading abilities, the program also cultivated children's confidence in interacting with texts, enriched vocabulary, and improved symbolic thinking and reading comprehension abilities (Hamzah & Jaafar, 2026).

These findings are consistent with Glenn Doman's perspective that reading is one of the highest human brain functions, as the entire learning process depends on reading ability. Thus, early reading habits are essential foundations for children's intellectual development. Through active parental involvement, the program created a more personal and emotional learning atmosphere. Children felt valued, supported, and appreciated in their learning process, increasing their intrinsic motivation to read. The emotional connection formed between children and parents during reading activities also strengthened children's interest in books and literacy activities in general (Florez, 1999).

Furthermore, these results reinforce Salindris Zone of Proximal Development theory, which explains that children can achieve higher cognitive abilities through social interaction with more experienced individuals, such as parents. In this context, parents functioned as scaffolding or learning supports, helping children reach their optimal potential. The support parents provided during home reading activities helped children recognize letters and words and cultivated critical thinking, focus, and reading comprehension abilities (Salindri et al., 2025).

The theory of school-family partnerships emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in children's learning processes. Through this program, communication between teachers and parents became more intensive, creating harmonious cooperation in supporting children's development. Teachers acted as facilitators providing directions, activity guides, and feedback on journals and photo documentation sent by parents weekly. Meanwhile, parents acted as primary implementers and facilitators of literacy activities at home. This collaboration made reading activities not merely a school task but part of a positive family culture.

The program's success can be attributed to several key components First, the daily read-aloud activities provided consistent exposure to text and modeled fluent reading with proper expression and intonation. Children who hear fluent reading develop a better understanding of how print works and how reading should sound.

Second, the syllable identification exercises strengthened phonological awareness—the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language. This skill is a critical precursor to successful reading development.

Third, literacy journals served dual purposes: they ensured program accountability and provided valuable data for teachers to monitor progress and identify students needing additional support.

Fourth, the home reading corners created physical spaces that signaled the importance and value of reading within the home environment, making books accessible and inviting (Mat et al., 2026)

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The observation results showing 85% active participation indicate strong program implementation fidelity. However, the relatively low independent reading initiation score (35%) suggests that while the program successfully established guided reading routines, developing autonomous reading habits requires longer-term implementation. This finding underscores the importance of sustained intervention and the gradual transfer of responsibility from parents to children as reading skills develop.

Moreover, the research findings have practical implications for primary school learning policies. Simple programs like this can be adapted by other schools to strengthen the national literacy movement. With a low cost, simple design, and family involvement, this program can be an effective model for cultivating reading interest among Indonesian children. Beyond academic benefits, this program also strengthens emotional relationships between children and parents, making literacy a bridge for affection and character formation.

The significance of this research extends beyond immediate reading improvement. By involving parents as active partners in literacy development, the program addresses the critical gap between school and home learning environments. This alignment is particularly important in the Indonesian context, where literacy challenges have been persistent despite national policy initiatives. The program demonstrates that effective literacy interventions need not be expensive or technically complex—consistent, simple activities with parental engagement can produce meaningful results (Insani et al., 2025).

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size was relatively small (20 students) and limited to one school, which may affect generalizability. The lack of a control group means that alternative explanations for the observed improvement cannot be completely ruled out, although the paired design controls for individual differences. Future research should employ larger samples, include control groups, and extend observation periods to examine long-term program effects.

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that the Simple Home Literacy Program has a positive, significant, and sustainable effect on beginning reading skills among first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan. This program not only helps children recognize letters and words but also builds positive attitudes toward reading, cultivates independent learning habits, and strengthens the family's role as the primary learning environment after school

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results and data analysis regarding the effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program on improving beginning reading skills among first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan, the following conclusions can be drawn: Initial Beginning Reading Skills (Pre-Test): The beginning reading skills of first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan before implementing the Simple Home Literacy Program were in the Low to Moderate category. This was demonstrated by the mean pre-test score of 64.2. The majority of students (60%) remained concentrated in the Low to Very Low categories, indicating that outside-school interventions were urgently needed to accelerate mastery of basic reading skills. Beginning Reading Skills After Intervention (Post-Test): Following the three-cycle Simple Home Literacy Program intervention, students' beginning reading skills showed significant improvement. The mean post-test score increased to 82.0. This 17.8-point increase demonstrates that the program involving parents proved highly effective in bridging the gap between basic reading abilities taught at school and intensive practice at home. Effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program (Hypothesis Testing): Based on the Paired Samples T-Test results, it was concluded that H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted (Sig. < 0.05). This statistically proves that there is a positive and significant effect of the Simple Home Literacy Program on improving beginning reading skills among first-grade students at SDN 18 Rantau Selatan. Active, structured, and consistent parental involvement as teacher partners proved to be the key success factor in stimulating literacy within the family environment.

AI Usage Statement

The author declares that no generative AI was used in the preparation, analysis, interpretation of data, or writing of this article.

Author Contribution Statement

For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used “Conceptualization, N.M.Z. and S.; methodology, N.M.Z.; software, N.M.Z.; validation, N.M.Z., S. and R.K.; formal analysis, N.M.Z.; investigation, N.M.Z.; resources, N.M.Z.; data curation, N.M.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, N.M.Z.; writing—review and editing, N.M.Z.; visualization, N.M.Z.; supervision, N.M.Z.; project administration, N.M.Z.; funding acquisition, S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.” Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported

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Ethical Compliance

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data Access Statement

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Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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