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Developing a Home Reading Model with Print and Digital Media to Enhance Basic Literacy Among 5–6-Year-Olds: A Study in Rembang District, Indonesia

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Keywords:

Development, *Home Reading*, Basic Literacy, 5–6 Years Old Children

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Received 19 05 2025

Revised 12 07 2025

Accepted 20 08 2025

Published Online First
29 08 2025



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Abstract

This study aims to develop, validate, and evaluate the effectiveness of a home reading model designed to foster basic literacy in children aged 5–6 years. Employing a research and development approach based on the Borg and Gall model, the study followed eight stages: data collection, planning, product development, expert validation, small-scale testing, product revision, large-scale trials, and dissemination. Participants included 16 children in the small-scale trial and 43 children in the large-scale trial from several public kindergartens in Rembang Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation, and analyzed using qualitative descriptive and quantitative statistical methods. The findings revealed a strong need to implement a home reading model that integrates both printed and digital media to enhance basic literacy. Media expert validation yielded a score of 95%, indicating a high level of validity and feasibility. Content validation by material experts resulted in a 73.3% score, categorized as moderately valid. Trial results showed high levels of acceptability and usability among users, and assessment outcomes indicated a 28.1% improvement in children's basic literacy skills. The study concludes that the developed home reading model, supported by local folktale-based storybooks, guidebooks, and literacy activity sheets in both print and digital formats, is effective in improving early literacy. This model promotes school–home collaboration and offers a culturally responsive approach to early childhood education.

To cite: Rohmah, S. Y., Utanto, Y. & Pristiwati, R. (2025). Developing a home reading model with print and digital media to enhance basic literacy among 5–6 year-olds: A study in Rembang District, Indonesia. *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini*, 10(2), 471–482. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jga.2025.103-04>

Introduction

The development of educational media has become a major focus in early childhood education as it plays a vital role in nurturing children's holistic growth, particularly their cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, and moral development. Among the various developmental domains, the cultivation of basic literacy skills in young children is especially important. Prior studies have emphasized the significance of media in improving basic literacy (Fitria, 2021), cultural literacy (Mawaddah et al., 2023), early literacy (Oakley et al., 2023), and moral intelligence (Haryaningrum et al., 2023). One of the most widely used activities to enhance children's literacy skills is reading books to them, where both the type of book and parental involvement play critical roles (Karima & Kurniawati, 2020). The selection of appropriate books and the frequency of parental reading at home are crucial factors that positively influence children's literacy development. Frequent reading sessions at home have been shown to strengthen literacy skills, while infrequent reading can hinder their progress.

Home reading, which refers to parents reading books to their children at home, is a widely adopted practice to support children's literacy growth. One notable implementation of this practice is the home reading program at the Islamic Center Samarinda Kindergarten, initiated by Dr. Ida Farida since the establishment of the institution and its affiliated elementary school. This program later evolved into a collaborative initiative between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and PP Muslimat during the 2015 national working meeting of Muslimat leaders in Samarinda. Dedicated to Early Childhood Education, this program aims to enhance children's intellectual development, strengthen the parent-child relationship, and improve children's story comprehension. Initially, the program relied exclusively on printed books. In the present study, the researchers have developed a home reading model using digital books, implemented in the State Kindergarten of Rembang Regency.

Previous studies have explored the differences in the effectiveness of printed and digital books in early childhood literacy development (Schulz-Heidorf et al., 2021). Interaction between parents and children using printed books has demonstrated positive effects on children's language and literacy development (Yuan et al., 2024). Print books offer diverse types and forms and are regarded as beneficial learning media. On the other hand, digital books are multimedia publications containing text, images, and sound, accessible through electronic devices such as tablets, smartphones, and computers (Sukardi, 2021). Digital books are often seen as more attractive, easier to distribute, and more user-friendly (Permatasari et al., 2022). Additionally, digital media can significantly enhance children's reading abilities (Maryani et al., 2023). Despite their respective advantages and disadvantages, both printed and digital books are expected to contribute meaningfully to the development of children's basic literacy skills.

Literacy encompasses a range of language abilities, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Bu'ulolo, 2021). UNESCO defines literacy as the capacity to read, write, and perform arithmetic, which are acquired through both formal and informal education within families and communities. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture outlines several domains of literacy, including reading and writing literacy, numeracy, scientific literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, and civic and cultural literacy (Kemendikbud, 2017). Literacy is also categorized into early literacy, basic literacy, library literacy, media literacy, technological literacy, and visual literacy (Ngurah Suragangga, 2017). This study specifically focuses on basic literacy, which includes children's listening skills, oral comprehension, and the ability to communicate through spoken language and visual cues, all of which are shaped by their interactions with the surrounding environment.

This study adopts the theoretical framework of Vygotsky, whose concept of the zone of proximal development emphasizes that certain tasks are difficult for children to complete independently and require assistance from adults (Syifauzakia et al., 2021). The use of scaffolding, in which the level of support is gradually adjusted by teachers, peers, or adults, is a central instructional strategy. The framework also highlights the importance of collaborative learning, cultural responsiveness in pedagogy, and the role of private speech in cognitive development (Syifauzakia et al., 2021). Social interaction, cultural context, and historical experience all contribute to the development of children's language, reading, and writing skills, which aligns with the goals of home reading programs (Karimah, 2020).

In Rembang Regency, various efforts to promote reading have been made, such as the establishment of village libraries across sub-districts. However, children's interest in reading remains low. The responsibility for fostering basic literacy is often placed solely on teachers, even though effective early childhood learning requires active involvement from parents. Optimal child development involves the participation of parents, other adults, and early childhood education services. Families serve as the primary and most influential educational environment for children. The family performs essential functions, including reproduction, education and socialization, legal and social governance, economic activity, and emotional development (Sandowil et al., 2021).

Home reading is a collaborative effort that actively engages both teachers and parents in supporting children's basic literacy. This activity creates an integrated learning environment in which children receive consistent reinforcement both at school and at home. Developing foundational literacy skills from an early age is crucial, as it lays the groundwork for future educational achievement. Based on these considerations, the objectives of this study are to: (1) develop a home reading model that incorporates both printed and digital books, (2) assess the validity of the developed model, and (3) evaluate its effectiveness in enhancing children's basic literacy skills.

Methods

Research Design and Approach

This study employs a research and development (R&D) approach aimed at creating and evaluating a home reading model to foster basic literacy skills among early childhood learners. The research is guided by the development stages proposed by Borg and Gall, which include: (1) preliminary study through observation and literature review, (2) model development, (3) expert validation to assess the feasibility of the model, (4) initial product trials, (5) product revision, (6) extended product trials, and (7) dissemination and implementation. A qualitative descriptive method was utilized to analyze non-numerical data during the development stages, while an experimental method was employed to measure the effectiveness of the developed model.

Participants and Research Setting

The participants in this study were children from public kindergartens in Rembang Regency, Central Java. The initial trial was conducted at TK Negeri Rembang, involving one group of Class B with 16 children aged 5 to 6 years. The extended trial took place in three public kindergartens: TK Negeri Pembina Pancur, TK Negeri Pembina Pamotan, and TK Negeri 1 Rembang, involving three groups of Class B students with a total of 43 children. Participants were selected purposively based on the schools' willingness to implement the model and the teachers' readiness to facilitate the activities. The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected using a variety of techniques: (1) Observation was conducted to document children's engagement in home reading activities and their literacy behavior during implementation; (2) Interviews were carried out with school principals and classroom teachers to gain insights into their perspectives on the model's feasibility and relevance; (3) Questionnaires were distributed to parents to assess their responses and involvement in the home reading process; and (4) Documentation was used to capture relevant records, such as photographs and activity logs. The research instruments were developed based on early childhood education theories and were validated through expert judgment involving three professionals in early childhood literacy development.

Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using gain score analysis to evaluate the improvement in children's literacy skills, with statistical processing performed using SPSS version 26. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed descriptively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Ethical procedures were strictly followed throughout the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participating parents, and the confidentiality of participants' identities was maintained. The research was officially approved by the Rembang District Education Office before implementation.

Result

Preliminary Study

In the initial research phase, observations were conducted in Rembang district to assess children's basic literacy. The findings indicated a need to enhance basic literacy learning by involving parents. Parental involvement is crucial for fostering children's basic literacy skill. Alongside observations, researchers interviewed school principals and classroom teachers. The interview results revealed: 1) 10 reading activities are already part of the children's learning process, 2) reading books is a key literacy activity for children, 3) printed books as reading materials, 4) there is support for developing digital books as reading materials, and 5) home reading is implemented as a learning activity to enhance children's basic literacy skills.

The results of the literature review related to basic literacy skills show that digital and printed book media can improve children's reading skills, characterised by children's development and children's interest in reading digital and printed books (Tjahjaningsih et al., 2022). Similar results of research by (Fitria, 2021) stated that the development of digital media in the form of *e-books* as a means of play can improve children's literacy skills. Literacy-based digital books are suitable for use in learning to facilitate the delivery of material (Meliyani & Tirtayani, 2022). The role of parents in home literacy is: first, as a source of literacy, namely as a teacher and companion of children's literacy, second, as a facilitator, namely providing reading space, books and readings, children's literacy APE, and third, as a regulator of the implementation of literacy programmes. (Hermawati, 2021). Furthermore, research (Ferianti & Irna, 2020) stated that family literacy can increase children's interest in reading.

The initial research analysis revealed that the home reading model needed to foster basic literacy skills in state kindergartens in Rembang district should utilize both digital and printed books. The use of these media is adapted to the preferences and needs of parents and children, allowing *them* to choose either digital or printed books based on their circumstances and preferences in promoting children's basic literacy skills. Additionally, the development of the home reading model includes guidebooks and children's basic literacy activity books, complementing the digital and printed storybooks.

Development of home reading Model

The development of the home reading model to enhance basic literacy skills in kindergartens in Rembang district includes the use of digital and printed storybooks based on local narratives, as well as guidebooks and children's basic literacy activity books. The specifics of this model's implementation in state kindergartens in Rembang district are as follows:

Print and digital storybooks based on local stories

The printed and digital storybooks used are stories based on local stories. The story used is a folktale of Rembang district, created by Kusaeri, which the researcher developed into a children's book with a type of picture book designed using Adobe Illustration. Printed books are distributed directly to parents, while digital books can be accessed through the homeliteration website. The titles of the storybooks used are RA Kartini, Putri Cempa, Dampo Awang, Bende Becak.

Home reading Handbook

The home reading guidebook serves as a reference for implementing the home reading model. It includes storytelling steps and teaching modules based on storybooks, designed for the home reading model. This guidebook is simply structured to assist teachers and parents in fostering children's basic literacy skills through home reading activities in public kindergartens in Rembang Regency.

Home reading Activity Book

Children's activity books are worksheets designed to help children develop early reading, writing, and counting skills. These books are themed around stories such as RA Kartini, Putri

Cempa, Bende Becak, and Watu Layar. After parents read the story to their children, they then assist their children in completing the activities in the book.

Implementation of home reading using Print and Digital Books

Implementation of home reading activities include: 1) parents read books to children using digital books or printed books, 2) parents with children discuss the story and hear the child retell the story, 3) Parents accompany children to complete activity book sheets that match the title of the book being read.

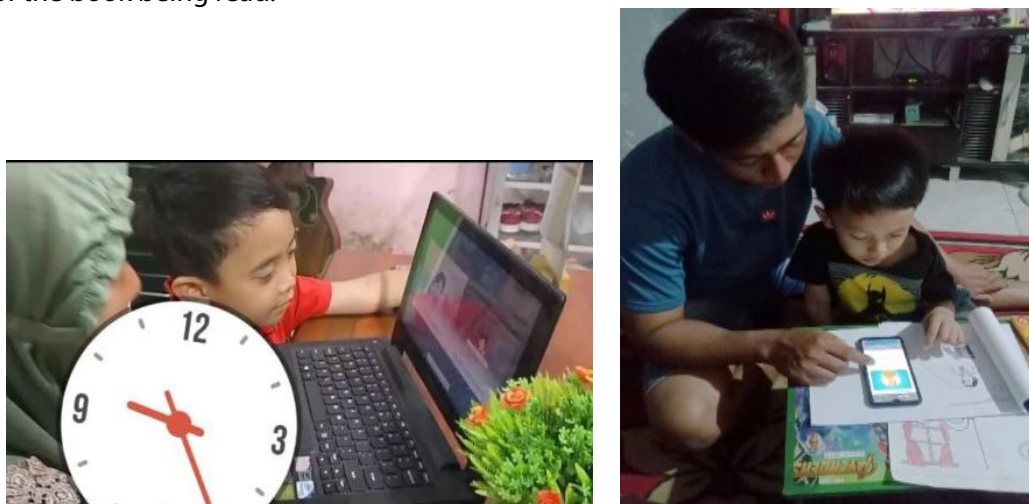


Figure 1. reading with digital books



Picture 2. reading a printed book Activity sheet

Model Validation

Media expert validation

Media expert validation was conducted by experts from the Early Childhood Education (PG PAUD) faculty at Ivet University Semarang. The evaluation focused on aspects such as correlation, accuracy, presentation suitability, language appropriateness, readability, and collaboration. The expert validators provided suggestions and comments, noting that digital-based learning media align with school digitalization efforts and literacy improvement, and that educating parents on using digital media can enhance children's literacy practices. The expert validators' assessment results of the home reading media model are as follows:

Table 1. Media Expert Validator Assessment

No.	Aspects Assessed	Score
1	Correlation	4
2	Accuracy	4
3	Appropriateness of alignment with literacy learning demands	4
4	Language conformity with correct and good language rules	3
5	Readability and collaborative	4
	Total Score	19

The acquisition of media expert validation results of 19 with a maximum score of 20, then the percentage of media expert validation is $19/20: 100\% = 95\%$. The results of the assessment percentage show that the results of expert validation of home reading media to improve basic literacy skills are declared valid and suitable for use.

Material expert validation

Material expert validation was conducted by Early Childhood Education (PG PAUD) lecturers at the Open University. The assessment focused on the material content, language appropriateness, and presentation suitability. The expert validators provided suggestions and comments, such as correcting typographical errors in the storybooks and creating special guidebooks for parents. The results of the expert validation of the home reading model materials to foster children's literacy skills are as follows:

Table 2. Assessment of Material Expert Validators

No.	Aspects Assessed	Score
1	Material	22
2	Appropriateness of presentation	12
3	Language appropriateness	10
	Total Score	44

The acquisition of a material expert validation assessment of 44 with a maximum score of 60, then the percentage of material expert validation is $44/60: 100\% = 73.3\%$. The results of the percentage of material validation assessment show that the results of the home reading model material to improve basic literacy skills are valid and can be used.

Model Testing

Small-scale trial

Following expert validation, the next step was to test the model. A small-scale trial was conducted at TK Negeri 2 Rembang, involving 16 children. The results of the respondents' assessments from the small-scale trial are as follows:

Table 3. Respondents' ratings on the small trial

No.	Aspects	Percentage Result				
		SB	B	S	K	SK
1	The attractiveness of the book can attract children's attention in home reading activities.	56.3	31.3	6.3	6.3	
2	The book display uses attractive illustrations	50.0	43.8	6.3		
3	Use of language to make it easier to understand the story	43.8	31.3	18.8		
4	Attractiveness of activities to children's enthusiasm	31.3	31.3	25.0	12.5	
5	Children's enthusiasm for reading activities increased	18.8	37.5	37.5	6.3	
6	The suitability of the book's reading content to the pleasure of listening to children's stories	25.0	37.5	31.3	6.3	
7	Ease of accessing books on children's information seeking skills	25.0	37.5	25.0	6.3	6.3
8	The suitability of the activity sheet for the ease with which children can complete the activity	18.8	56.3	18.8	6.3	
9	Children's ability to complete worksheets is good	25.0	50.0	18.8	6.3	

10	Appropriateness of the book to children's basic literacy skills and culture	37.5	31.3	25.0	6.3
Total Percentage		331.5	387.8	212.8	56.6

Large-scale model trials

A large-scale trial of the home reading model to enhance basic literacy and cultural skills was conducted in three kindergartens: TK Negeri Pembina Pancur, TK Negeri Pembina Pamotan, and TK Negeri 1 Rembang. The following are the results showing the percentage of achievement in basic literacy and cultural skills:

Table 4. Large Scale Model Trial

No.	Aspects	Percentage Result				
		SB	B	S	K	SK
1	The attractiveness of the book can attract children's attention in home reading activities.	41.9	53.5	4.7		
2	The book display uses attractive illustrations	51.2	44.2	2.3	2.3	
3	Use of language to make it easier to understand the story	39.5	48.8	4.7	4.7	2.3
4	Attractiveness of activities to children's enthusiasm	39.5	53.5	4.7	2.3	
5	Children's enthusiasm for reading activities increased	46.5	34.9	18.6		
6	The suitability of the book's reading content to the pleasure of listening to children's stories	34.9	48.8	14.0	2.3	
7	Ease of accessing books on children's information seeking skills	44.2	44.2	7.0	4.7	
8	The suitability of the activity sheet for the ease with which children can complete the activity	32.6	44.2	2.3	2.3	
9	Children's ability to complete worksheets is good	34.9	53.5	7.0	4.7	
10	Appropriateness of the book to children's basic literacy skills and culture	37.2	46.5	7.0	9.3	
Total Percentage		402.4	472.1	72.3	32.6	2.3

Basic Literacy and Child Culture Assessment Results

The results of the basic literacy and cultural assessment in the large-scale test of the home reading model are presented in the following table:

Table 5. Assessment of children's basic literacy and culture

No.	Aspects	Assessment Percentage			
		BSB	BSH	MB	BB
1	Children are able to listen to stories	53.5	30.2	14.0	
2	Children are able to recognise letters	53.5	44.2	2.3	
3	Children are able to say letters and numbers	55.8	41.9	2.3	
4	Children dare to ask questions about the story	44.5	39.5	16.3	
5	Children are able to understand the story	44.2	46.5	9.3	
6	The child is able to retell the story told	30.2	48.8	20.9	
Total Percentage		281.7	251.9	65.1	

Discussion

The development of a home reading model to enhance basic literacy and cultural awareness among young children has demonstrated both validity and effectiveness. The model incorporates both print and digital media, emphasizing the importance of engaging children in literacy-rich environments through interactive reading with parents. Engaging in home reading activities that involve both printed and digital materials allows children to develop not only their reading skills but also their cultural sensitivity. These activities, particularly when guided by

parental involvement, have been shown to significantly improve children's basic literacy abilities (Laçin, 2023). This aligns with findings that book reading interventions can enhance literacy outcomes and that early literacy skills in preschoolers are strong predictors of future reading success (Wackerle-Hollman et al., 2024). The effectiveness of storytelling activities also supports early literacy growth (Maureen et al., 2022).

Developing literacy from an early age equips children with the foundational skills needed for academic progression and lifelong learning. Through consistent home reading activities, children begin to build fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and cultural understanding. The earlier children develop these literacy foundations, the better they are prepared for formal education. Literacy difficulties during preschool years are associated with heightened anxiety in primary school settings (Kargiotidis & Manolitsis, 2024). Therefore, literacy development should be addressed from early childhood by involving parents in guided reading and writing exercises. Writing activities incorporated into early learning by preschool teachers have also proven effective in promoting literacy growth (Deborah et al., 2024).

The integration of both print and digital media in this home reading model responds to the diverse needs of early childhood education in a digital age. The model not only enhances children's literacy but also empowers parents to become active participants in their children's development. The presence of media, when combined with supportive guidance, can turn everyday reading moments into meaningful learning experiences. Parental awareness programs that guide families in choosing suitable literacy activities and games are essential for children's holistic development (Bipath et al., 2022). Observations from this study show that parents use expressive language and warm intonation when reading, which increases children's engagement and comprehension. These findings are consistent with studies on effective early literacy strategies and shared reading practices in educational contexts (Meeks et al., 2020; Weadman et al., 2023).

This study was conducted with children in class B of a kindergarten in Rembang Regency, all of whom were without impairments. As such, the scope of the findings is limited and may not reflect the needs of children with disabilities. Several studies have highlighted that children with visual and hearing impairments tend to have lower literacy development than their peers (Akmese et al., 2024; Kahraman Evrenkaya & Ergül, 2023; Loh et al., 2024). Future research should consider inclusive models that accommodate the needs of all learners, including those with diverse abilities. Addressing these gaps can make literacy programs more equitable and ensure broader impact.

Print and digital media were both found to positively contribute to the development of basic literacy skills in young children. The flexibility of combining printed books and e-books allows for more tailored and engaging reading sessions. Both media types are effective in improving early reading skills (Tjahjaningsih et al., 2022). The use of e-books with print references is an effective method in enhancing foundational skills (van Dijken, 2023). The use of printed books has a consistently positive impact on literacy acquisition, while digital resources support interactive learning when used appropriately (Eutsler & Trotter, 2020; Permatasari et al., 2022).

The duration of reading sessions, typically 5 to 7 minutes, was similar across both print and digital formats. Prior studies found no significant difference in outcomes based on reading duration, although digital media tends to produce more verbal engagement (Schulz-Heidorf et al., 2021). The way parents deliver stories with enthusiasm and clear expression has a profound effect on children's enjoyment and learning. Parental attitudes toward reading are directly linked to children's literacy development (Alramamneh et al., 2023). The home learning environment and parental engagement with digital libraries support literacy growth (Chan & Rao, 2023; Sung et al., 2023).

In today's digital landscape, the use of screens among children is unavoidable. However, the presence of media should be accompanied by active parental mediation to ensure its educational value. Children spend more time on entertainment platforms like YouTube than on

shared reading (Alroqi et al., 2022). Structured digital reading sessions must be designed to suit children's developmental needs, including guidance on timing and content. Educators' confidence and creativity in integrating digital media into instruction enhance the effectiveness of literacy learning (Vidal-Hall et al., 2020). The home reading model must be viewed as a collaborative framework between parents and teachers to foster literacy and cultural values through appropriate digital and print media use.

The findings of this study, supported by interviews and literature review, emphasize the importance of designing culturally relevant reading materials. The model features local folktales such as RA Kartini, Putri Cempa, Batu Layar, and Bende Becak, which are familiar to the children of Rembang Regency. These stories, written by Kusaeri, reflect local wisdom and are presented in both print and digital formats with engaging illustrations designed via Adobe Illustrator. Selecting digital reading materials should consider elements like theme, duration, language play, interaction, and flexibility (Hoel & Jernes, 2023). Validation results from media and material experts rated the model highly, with media validity reaching 95% and material content validity at 73.3%. Large-scale trials also demonstrated a 28.1% improvement in children's basic literacy development, indicating that this model can be effectively implemented to support literacy learning in early childhood education.

Conclusion

The study concludes that developing a home reading model utilizing both printed and digital book media is effective in enhancing children's basic and cultural literacy skills in state kindergartens in the Rembang district. The success of these home reading activities hinges on teachers' creativity in presenting digital media and active parental involvement. This seamless learning experience between school and home positively influences early childhood education in the region. This research would be enhanced if future researchers conduct similar studies and expand upon the current research and development efforts. The findings from this study are anticipated to assist educators in creating learning environments that nurture children's basic literacy skills. The researcher hopes that this work can be further developed and offer benefits to subsequent researchers.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

All authors contributed equally and approved the final manuscript.

Funding Statement

This study received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Additional Information

No additional information is available.

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