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The Role of Reading Corner in Strengthening Students' Character Education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo

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ABSTRACT

SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo has made innovations in supporting the strengthening of character education through the provision of *reading corners* in every classroom. This study aims to identify the role of the *reading corner* in strengthening students' character education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo, as well as to identify the obstacles and impacts involved. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis is carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study show that the *reading corner* has a strategic role as a means of habituating character values. Through habituation activities in the *reading corner*, students become accustomed to being independent, choosing readings according to their interests, and obeying the applicable rules. The *reading corner* also instills an honest attitude and responsibility in caring for books, including reporting any damage, and encourages cooperation through decorating, tidying up, and reading together. However, the implementation of the *reading corner* still faces obstacles in the form of limited book collections, a lack of variety in literacy activities, the absence of special managers, and limited financial support. This finding confirms that the *reading corner* is not only a literacy facility but also an effective medium for strengthening character education through simple and meaningful habituation, indicating that more comprehensive measurements of effectiveness are needed in the future.

Keywords: *Reading Corner, Character Education, Character Values, Elementary School, SDN 3 M.*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary means of developing a quality future generation. Therefore, education is a key priority, as a quality generation is one that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses a strong personality, noble character, social awareness, and strong morals and character (Rasyid et al., 2024). Instilling character in students is crucial, given the influx of foreign cultures into the nation today, potentially influencing the character of the younger generation. According to the Ministry of National Education, character is a trait or quality possessed by an individual or group, which can be positive or negative. In the context of education, character refers to the application of good values, including kindness, good intentions, and a positive lifestyle, instilled in a person and demonstrated through daily actions. Character is developed through the process of thinking, heart, practice, and emotions, as well as the will of both individuals and groups (Kemdikbud, 2019). Character can be referred to as personality, which is an internal characteristic that

influences a person's thoughts, behavior, style, and habits (Halimah & Guru, 2018; Huda, 2023; Ridwan & Suteja, 2018; Suroto, 2022; yudhi septian harahap, 2020). A person's character is formed through repeated activities that become habits. These habits then become ingrained and shape a person's identity. Fostering and strengthening character education in the school environment is a shared responsibility involving not only teachers but also students and parents (Lestari & Handayani, 2023).

Character education encompasses a dynamic process involving interpersonal relationships and other dimensions, both internal and external. Character education addresses not only existing problems but also how to develop good habits in their lives. This allows students to develop self-awareness and cultivate goodness within themselves, which they can apply at all times (Setiawan et al., 2021). According to Neni Triana (2022), character education is "a basic concept that must be applied to a person's thinking to foster better moral, physical, and spiritual well-being." Character education is an educational process that focuses not only on academic aspects but also on developing students' moral character. This is achieved by instilling positive values and cultivating good behavior in students (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2019). Character education is part of the process of forming a quality young generation and is an important aspect that must be present in the Indonesian education system (Lestari & Handayani, 2023).

According to information from the National Commission for Child Protection (*Komnas PA*), 3,547 cases of violence against children were recorded throughout 2023. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (*KPAI*) reported 2,355 cases of child protection violations, several of which occurred in educational settings.

Based on the National Student Index, indicators for strengthening education are divided into six main groups: religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, character, and integrity. These six indicators are interrelated and serve as a crucial foundation for developing students with strong character and morals, capable of making a positive contribution to society. By strengthening these six aspects, it is hoped that students will develop holistically, encompassing knowledge, attitudes, and social skills that benefit themselves and their environment.

A *reading corner* is a dedicated area within a classroom that is designed in an attractive manner. It aims to foster students' interest in reading and cultivate a love of reading. The books available in the *reading corner* are varied and not limited to textbooks. The books are drawn from the school library's collection. The books selected must be interesting to encourage students to read them. Therefore, in an effort to strengthen character education, the types of books that should be used include books that describe a person's character, stories or fiction containing moral values, and books that reinforce other aspects of character education. Through the use of school facilities, students can gradually develop their character through activities in the *reading corner* and through books that inspire and are frequently read by students. This will gradually improve their character, reflecting their individual characteristics (Rizky Satria et al., 2022; Santoso, Damayanti, et al., 2023; Santoso, Sakinah, et al., 2023; Sueca, I Nengah & Ari, 2023; Syah et al., 2023).

Previous studies on character education and literacy in schools have provided foundational insights but also highlight existing gaps. Rasyid et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of integrating character education into the curriculum to foster students' moral

and social development; however, their research primarily focused on classroom instruction and teacher-led activities, leaving limited attention to the role of school facilities such as *reading corners*. Similarly, Sueca and Ari (2023) examined the use of *reading corners* in promoting literacy habits among elementary students, demonstrating their potential to enhance reading interest, yet they did not explicitly analyze how these *reading corners* contribute to the holistic development of student character, including religiosity, nationalism, independence, cooperation, integrity, and moral values.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "The Role of *Reading Corners* in Strengthening Student Character Education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo." This is because there are not many studies that specifically discuss the role of *reading corners* in strengthening character education. This research will be conducted in Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo Village, specifically at SDN 3 Mrayan. The reason for choosing this location is based on initial observations made during community service at SDN 3 Mrayan, an elementary school located in a village quite far from the city. Despite its remote location, this school has simple *reading corner* facilities. However, it attracts attention because, despite its distance from the city, there are *reading corners* in every classroom that are actively used. Based on this background, this study was conducted to understand more deeply the role, obstacles, and impact of *reading corners* in supporting the strengthening of student character education.

The study aims to identify how *reading corners* support character development, the challenges in optimizing their use, and their tangible impacts on students' behavior and attitudes. The findings are expected to provide practical guidance for schools in remote areas to maximize existing resources, promote moral and social growth, and offer evidence-based strategies for integrating reading facilities into character education programs.

METHOD

The research approach used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. This study provides results in the form of an overview of the role of the *reading corner* in strengthening student character education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo. The subjects in this survey were the principal, teachers, and school residents, especially students who are active in *reading corner* activities and excel in extracurricular and social activities. The data analysis process in qualitative research is carried out through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In this case, the research location is in Mrayan village. Specifically, it is located at SDN 3 Mrayan, one of the elementary schools with state status located in the Ngrayun District, Ponorogo Regency, East Java.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Reading Corners in Strengthening Students' Character Education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo

To collect data, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the principal, homeroom teachers, and students actively utilizing the reading corner. Based on the interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that the reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan has met the success indicators as stipulated in the Ministry of Education and Culture's School Literacy Movement Guidelines (2019). Indicators of success for the reading

corner encompass three main aspects: the availability of facilities and management, student engagement and utilization, and fostering a reading culture.

Reading corners are available in every grade I through VI. They are located in the corners of classrooms with simple bookshelves, some creatively decorated with color and some display student artwork, such as drawings or paintings. This is in line with the statement of Mr. Yudi Handoyo, the principal, who said:

"The reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan was initially established in the 2023 school year. The idea came from me. After analyzing the students and I, it turned out that many students in grades 1 through 3 were not yet fluent in reading. So we created an initiative or method to encourage them to practice reading. One of the ways was through the reading corner. They responded well to it..." (01/W/V/2025)

This statement shows that the initiative to create the reading corner stemmed from an analysis of the literacy needs of students, especially the lower grades. The existence of the reading corner is a strategic step to address low reading skills. Every morning, students read in the reading corner for 15 minutes. This aligns with the statement of Mr. Haryanto, the homeroom teacher and teacher, who emphasized:

"We encourage the students to come to class and take a book from the reading corner. About fifteen minutes before class begins. Sometimes, if the schedule is busy, it's cut short, but it continues regularly." (01/W/IV/2025)

This demonstrates that the reading corner is being used regularly and is becoming part of the learning routine. A sixth-grade student, Silla Gisela Mutiara, responded positively to this:

"Every morning, we read in the reading corner, except on Mondays. Sometimes, the schedule is alternated, for example, today it's for the girls and tomorrow it's for the boys, so there's no fighting over it." (02/W/IV/2025)

After explaining the technical indicators for the success of the reading corner, this study will present data from interviews, observations, and documentation regarding the role of the reading corner in strengthening the three main character education values: independence, integrity, and mutual cooperation. The following is the explanation:

The Role of Reading Corners in Strengthening the Education of Independent Character Values

Independence in the context of this research includes: students' ability to start reading without waiting for instructions, freedom to choose reading materials according to their interests, and discipline in returning books to their proper places.

Observationally, during morning literacy time, students enter the classroom, put down their bags and proceed to the reading corner to retrieve books. The teacher provides only initial reinforcement, while the students make their own book selections. In some classes, a rotation system (female and male) is implemented to prevent crowding, and students understand and implement this agreement without much direction.

The thematic meaning of independence is that the consistency of a morning reading routine based on self-choice fosters student initiative. Follow-up activities, such as storytelling, develop social independence (confidence in expressing opinions). The agreement on taking turns using the reading corner demonstrates the ability to regulate behavior independently in a limited environment. Thus, the independence that emerges includes academic independence (initiative to read directly to the reading corner), students' ability to choose reading materials according to their interests, and returning books directly after use. Additional findings from the research include personal-affective independence (self-confidence), and simple organizational skills (organizing turns and maintaining shared resources). These results indicate that literacy habits through reading corners not only

support increased interest in reading, but also become an important vehicle in forming students' independent attitudes in a complete and gradual manner.

The Role of Reading Corners in Strengthening Integrity Character Value Education

Integrity in this study is understood as honesty, a sense of responsibility for shared resources, adherence to agreed-upon rules, and the courage to be honest when damaging a book collection. The reading corner serves as a training ground because students interact directly with reading materials that are shared property. The reading corner not only provides a place for students to read books but also serves as a learning space for honesty and responsibility through the daily activities carried out within it. The pattern that emerges in this habituation is a reading activity that begins with students' personal initiative to choose their own books, followed by the process of caring for, storing, and returning books to their proper places. These activities encourage students to practice honesty in using the reading corner, such as speaking honestly when a book is damaged or forgotten to be returned.

The tendency emerging from the reading corner activities is the formation of responsible and honest habits, both in maintaining the facilities and in daily behavior. The motivations driving this behavior come from two main sources: the content of the stories in the books, which contain moral messages about honesty and responsibility, and a school environment that supports the implementation of these values through teacher reinforcement and class agreements.

Thus, it can be concluded that the reading corner serves as a medium for instilling integrity. The reading corner plays a crucial role in fostering honesty among students at SDN 3 Mrayan. Through regular reading activities and the development of disciplined behavior, students gradually learn to be honest when using the reading corner. This honesty is reflected when students confidently admit to damaged or lost books without fear or shame.

The morally charged stories students read, such as stories about kindness, honesty, and responsibility, serve as learning resources that internalize the value of honesty. Furthermore, consistent teacher guidance in supporting reading corner activities provides a safe space for students to practice openness and not hide mistakes. Simple processes such as reporting the condition of a book, returning it in good condition, and discussing the story's message make the reading corner a platform for practicing honesty in daily school activities. Thus, the presence of the reading corner significantly supports the development of integrity, particularly in the areas of honesty and responsibility for one's own behavior.

Seemingly simple activities such as caring for books, telling the truth, and being responsible for what is read are part of the process of forming students' integrity character which is carried out consistently and enjoyably..

The Role of Reading Corners in Strengthening the Character Education Values of Mutual Cooperation/Cooperation

The value of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) in the context of this research is evident through the habit of working together, discussing with each other, and maintaining cleanliness and tidiness in the reading corner. Patterns emerging from informant accounts indicate that students frequently read together or discuss reading material in groups. This group reading activity is a simple way to foster positive social interactions. Mr. Haryanto, the homeroom teacher, explained that through collaborative activities in the reading corner, students learn to listen to each other, respect each other's opinions, and work together in a relaxed atmosphere.

From the data presented, it can be concluded that the reading corner plays a significant role in strengthening student character education at SDN 3 Mrayan, particularly in fostering the values of independence, integrity, and mutual cooperation. This role is evident through

the routine morning reading activities, supervised by teachers, and through student interaction with the simple yet functionally designed reading corner environment.

First, in fostering independence, the reading corner provides a platform for students to take the initiative to read without being told, choose books based on their interests, and take responsibility for the books they use. Voluntary reading fosters independence both academically and personally. Students become accustomed to taking turns using the reading corner and are beginning to confidently share their reading, demonstrating growing self-confidence.

Second, in instilling integrity, the reading corner serves as a platform for practicing honesty and responsibility. Students are accustomed to returning books to their proper places, protecting them from damage, and acknowledging mistakes made with shared resources. This is supported by teacher guidance, which creates a safe space for students to be open, and by reading content rich in moral values such as honesty, kindness, and responsibility.

Third, the reading corner plays a role in fostering the value of mutual cooperation, reflected in the habit of reading together, discussing stories, and helping each other maintain the tidiness and cleanliness of the reading corner. The social interactions fostered through these literacy activities foster a sense of togetherness and cooperation among students, as well as strengthening empathy and tolerance within the classroom.

In addition to strengthening character values, the reading corner also functions as part of a school culture that supports the habit of reading from an early age. Teachers and the principal play an active role in managing and facilitating these activities, ensuring that the reading corner is not only a literacy resource but also a space for holistic character development. Thus, the reading corner has played a strategic role in strengthening character education at SDN 3 Mrayan in a sustainable and contextual manner according to the needs and conditions of the school.

Obstacles in Implementing Reading Corners to Strengthen Character Education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo

In implementing the reading corner program to strengthen students' character education at SDN 3 Mrayan, several obstacles were encountered by the school, homeroom teachers, and students as users. These obstacles were both technical and non-technical, and they certainly reduced the effectiveness of the reading corner in optimally shaping students' character. The following are the results of interviews conducted by researchers with the principal as the organizer, the homeroom teacher as the facilitator, and the students as active users of the reading corner regarding the obstacles encountered during the implementation of the reading corner program to strengthen students' character education.

Mr. Yudi Handoyo, the principal and organizer of the reading corner program, stated that the main obstacle related to the program to strengthen students' character education through the reading corner is funding, as there is no dedicated person to manage the reading corner effectively. He stated:

"Yes, of course there are obstacles. For example, the budget for managing the reading corner is still minimal and inconsistent. To date, there has been no specific allocation from the school or government for the procurement of books and supporting facilities for the reading corner. Furthermore, the reading corner does not have a dedicated staff member. Management is still entirely the responsibility of the teachers, while teachers themselves have many other responsibilities in the classroom, so the reading corner cannot be fully implemented." (01/W/V/2025)

Furthermore, beyond budget and fund management, limitations are also apparent in the facilities. The reading corners currently in each classroom are still rudimentary,

consisting of only a small table, a simple shelf, a carpet or chair, and a few simple decorations, but they are the result of the creativity of the teachers and students. This can be seen in the researcher's direct documentation of one of the classes, as follows:



Figure 1. Simple Reading Corner Display
Source: Researcher Documentation

There's only a small wooden shelf attached to the wall, a simple table, a carpet, and a few decorative wall ornaments. These minimal facilities make the reading corner less than optimal for students who want to read or engage in literacy activities. Mr. Yudi Handoyo then stated:

"The reading corner is just a small corner in the classroom with a simple shelf. Ideally, a more comfortable and conducive space is needed to make students more comfortable reading. So that it can truly become a center of character learning at school in the future, Miss." (01/W/V/2025)

Similarly, Mr. Haryanto, the homeroom teacher, also revealed several implementation challenges. He stated:

"The main obstacle is the lack of dedicated staff to manage the reading corner. All management is still handled by the homeroom teacher, despite their busy teaching schedule. Furthermore, activities in the reading corner are still limited to reading and discussion, with few creative activities actively involving students. This presents a challenge, especially without guidance; students tend to be noisy or playful, especially in the lower grades." (01/W/IV/2025)

Furthermore, he also mentioned that the collection of books for character education and general education is still very limited, and some students are starting to get bored with the monotonous reading material:

"I think the number and variety of books in the reading corner are quite sufficient and supportive, but they still need to be expanded. Some students are starting to complain about the monotony of the books. Although some books contain moral messages, they lack sufficient variety in terms of themes and characterization. To support the instillation of values such as empathy, courage, and responsibility, a more varied, more plentiful reading material is needed, appropriate for the students' ages and real-life experiences." (01/W/IV/2025)

Despite these challenges, the school has implemented solutions to address them. Mr. Yudi Handoyo stated:

"To address these challenges, the school has undertaken several efforts, both internally and externally. Internally, teachers are encouraged to be more creative in utilizing the reading corner, for example by holding activities like storytelling competitions, group

reading sessions, or book discussions. This is expected to add variety and engage students. Externally, the school is collaborating with the library to provide reading materials. We are also planning to change the concept of the reading corner, but it's still in progress, as it's been two years and some classroom decorations are damaged." (01/W/V/2025)

Based on the principal's explanation, it can be concluded that the school is making a serious effort to address the challenges faced by the reading corner during the implementation of the character education strengthening program for students at SDN 3 Mrayan. The reading corner has become a mandatory program at the school, not only to instill a culture of literacy but also to instill character education values in students.

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that there are four main obstacles in implementing character education through the reading corner:

The budget is not consistent or is still minimal

One of the main obstacles to establishing a reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan is an inconsistent or still very small budget. Procurement of adequate equipment for the reading corner, including new books, bookshelves, carpets, and attractive designs, is hampered by limited financial resources. This impacts student comfort and how they utilize the reading corner optimally. Interviews revealed that funding for the reading corner development remains dependent on allocations, the amount and timing of which are uncertain. This dependency pattern makes the reading corner management unstable. Some development plans have even been postponed due to budget constraints in the current year. The tendency for limited funding also makes it difficult for the school to innovate or regularly update its book collection. The available books are often donated or from older collections, resulting in a lack of variety and unattractiveness for students. This has the potential to diminish students' interest in reading and reduce the effectiveness of the reading corner as a means of strengthening character.

The primary cause of this problem is the lack of a dedicated and sustainable funding system for the reading corner. Schools still need to design alternative fundraising strategies or partner with external parties, such as literacy communities, parents, or private institutions, so that reading corners can develop optimally and sustainably.

There are no special officers to manage the reading corner optimally.

Another significant obstacle is the lack of dedicated staff to manage the reading corner. Currently, activities in the reading corner rely entirely on the initiative of teachers, who also have primary responsibility for teaching. This situation prevents optimal and regular supervision and utilization of the reading corner. Interview findings indicate that teachers are often overwhelmed in dividing their time between core learning activities and managing the reading corner. It's not uncommon for the reading corner to become deserted or less active because there's no teacher to assist or direct students in reading activities. This undoubtedly impacts the continuity of activities and student discipline in utilizing the reading corner.

The lack of dedicated staff also makes it difficult for the school to plan and measure the reading corner program. The underlying reasons for this obstacle are limited human resources and the lack of a specific policy governing the assignment or official involvement of the reading corner staff at SDN 3 Mrayan. Therefore, concrete steps are needed from the school to appoint a permanent staff member, or at least form a small team to be responsible for reading corner activities on a rotating basis.

Lack of variety in reading corner activities

The limited variety of activities in the reading corner also poses a challenge in strengthening character education for students through the corner. Engaging students in active participation requires creative and engaging activities. At SDN 3 Mrayan, activities are typically limited to reading books independently or with the teacher, discussions, and summarizing story content without any other incentives such as quizzes, inter-class story competitions, or other creative activities. This results in the reading corner feeling less lively and less likely to stimulate students' curiosity. A theme emerging from the findings of interviews, observations, and documentation is that students need a more creative and engaging approach to prevent reading from becoming boring. Without a variety of activities, students tend to quickly lose interest and view the reading corner as merely a supplement, rather than a vital part of character learning. This tendency indicates that the reading corner has not been optimally utilized as a medium for developing character values through engaging literacy experiences. Without a variety of activities, students tend to quickly lose interest and view the reading corner as merely a supplement, rather than a vital part of character learning.

This lack of variety in activities stems from the lack of a structured program that creatively integrates the reading corner with character learning at SDN 3 Mrayan. There needs to be training or workshops for teachers or permanent administrators for the next reading corner to design interesting literacy activities, as well as strengthening support from the school principal so that the reading corner becomes a dynamic forum.

Student discipline is not optimal if there is no firm guidance from teachers

Student discipline issues also pose a challenge in implementing the reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan. Research has found that students tend to be unruly in the reading corner, especially when there is no direct teacher supervision. Some students use the reading corner for play or conversation, without seriously reading books. A common theme that emerged was the need to strengthen a culture of discipline in students so they can use the reading corner independently and responsibly. This discipline is not only related to written rules but also includes positive habits that must be developed continuously. This trend indicates that the success of the reading corner as a means of character building is greatly influenced by teacher guidance and consistent direction. If the teacher is not firm or absent, students easily break the rules or even ignore the function of the reading corner.

The root of this problem is the need for a more systematic approach to character building, including clear rewards and sanctions, as well as fostering a joyful reading habit. Furthermore, it is important to involve students more deeply in the management of the reading corner so they feel ownership and responsibility for maintaining order within the corner.

The Impact of the Reading Corner in Strengthening Student Character Education at SDN 3 Mrayan

The implementation of the reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan not only aims to increase students' interest in reading in general, but also has a significant impact on character development. Based on interviews with the principal, homeroom teachers, and students from different grades, as well as field observations and documentation, it was found that the reading corner has been an effective tool in fostering character values in students.

The implementation of the reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan not only aims to increase reading interest but also fosters positive character traits in a concrete way. Based on in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, the program's impact is reflected in three main aspects: independence, integrity, and mutual cooperation.

Impact on Independence

The reading corner has a direct impact on the growth of student independence. This is evident in the students' habit of reading voluntarily without teacher prompting. Every morning, before class begins, they pick up a book and begin reading independently. The principal, Mr. Yudi Handoyo, emphasized:

This habit demonstrates that students take the initiative in utilizing their literacy time. They enthusiastically choose their favorite reading material upon arrival. Some students even arrive early to have more time to read. This habit is a clear example of how the reading corner program can facilitate the development of naturally independent behavior. Furthermore, students are able to choose reading materials based on their interests without detailed guidance from the teacher. They prefer being given the freedom to choose their own favorite storybooks.

Another trend that emerges from this habit is the creation of positive routines that make students feel personally responsible for the cleanliness and sustainability of the reading corner. This is evident in the students' proactive attitude in reminding each other when a friend forgets to return a book or makes a mess of the shelves.

With a consistent process and daily practice, a pattern of independent behavior emerges that is not temporary. The reading corner program at SDN 3 Mrayan has become a strategic step in strengthening student independence through simple, fun, and accessible methods for all children.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that independence is one of the primary impacts of the reading corner. The planned literacy habituation process, supported by teacher guidance and students' freedom to choose reading materials, significantly contributes to the development of more mature learning independence.

Impact on Integrity

In addition to fostering independence, the implementation of a reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan also significantly strengthens students' integrity. Integrity, in this context, encompasses not only verbal honesty but also a responsible attitude in using shared facilities, the courage to admit mistakes, and adherence to agreed-upon rules. These three indicators form the foundation of character that is expected to develop consistently through reading activities and interactions in the reading corner.

The researchers' observations during reading activities also revealed consistent behavioral patterns. For example, students who were initially reluctant to talk about damaging books gradually became more willing to approach the teacher to explain what happened. This process demonstrates that developing integrity requires time and an environment that supports openness. During book discussions, students were encouraged to express their honest opinions about the stories they read, further strengthening their courage to express their opinions and facts. Another trend identified in the implementation of the reading corner was a growing sense of moral responsibility. Students began to perceive that caring for books and adhering to rules were not merely formal obligations but part of a mutually respectful attitude. For example, when the reading corner was busy, students took turns waiting their turn and reminding each other to maintain silence. Although this activity is simple, it incorporates interconnected processes of practicing discipline, honesty, and tolerance.

These findings demonstrate that strengthening integrity through the reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan is not merely a slogan or a mere discourse. The internalization of these values is truly evident in students' behavior, from how they use facilities, comply with rules, to being honest when facing problems. Teachers and the principal play a crucial role in creating a conducive atmosphere that encourages children to speak the truth without fear.

Impact on Mutual Cooperation

The implementation of a reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan not only fosters independence and integrity but also positively fosters a spirit of mutual cooperation and collaboration among students. Through shared reading, discussions, and collective care of the reading corner, the values of togetherness begin to form naturally in students' daily behavior.



Figure 2. Discussion Activities in the Reading Corner
Source: Researcher Documentation

Another trend emerging from the reading corner activities is the development of a habit of mutual respect among students for differing opinions. During discussions, it's not uncommon for students to have differing interpretations of stories. However, discussions are conducted in a relaxed manner, without imposing expectations. Teachers facilitate discussions so that students get used to listening to their peers before responding.

In addition to discussions, the spirit of mutual cooperation is also reflected in the habit of tidying up the reading corner together. After finishing reading, students don't just leave books lying around, but remind each other to return them to the shelves and ensure they are tidy. This habit gradually fosters social responsibility and an awareness of shared roles in maintaining school facilities.

The motivation for fostering mutual cooperation in the reading corner is also reinforced by an environment that supports positive interactions. Teachers provide ample opportunities for students to discuss or read in groups without pressure. This approach makes students feel comfortable working together without fear of making mistakes or being reprimanded. Furthermore, teachers create simple rules that must be followed collectively, such as schedules for taking turns using specific books, assigning reading groups, and responsibilities for keeping bookshelves clean. These rules are gradually instilled, so that students become accustomed to carrying out collective activities with discipline. Teacher observations indicate that the mutual cooperation habits cultivated through the reading corner have begun to impact student behavior outside of reading. Students become more cooperative in group assignments, more caring when a friend is struggling, and more enthusiastic when activities are carried out together. Thus, the reading corner has proven to be an effective means of strengthening the character of mutual cooperation, which includes helping each other choose reading material, students voluntarily assisting friends who are confused about choosing books, and discussing the content of the reading material together. Discussions not only broaden understanding but also foster the courage to express opinions.

Students maintain the cleanliness and tidiness of the reading corner. Students remind each other to put away books after use.

These three aspects indicate that the habit of mutual cooperation through the reading corner has successfully fostered an attitude of togetherness, empathy, and social awareness. These positive behavioral patterns develop without coercion, but rather gradually through enjoyable and meaningful literacy experiences.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings obtained from the data presentation and the research results, which will be discussed in greater detail by linking the field findings to relevant theories, the researcher seeks to answer the research focus and uncover the role of the reading corner in strengthening student character education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo.

The role of the reading corner in strengthening student character education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo

The research findings indicate that reading corners play a strategic role in strengthening students' character education, as evidenced by several key indicators. Interviews with principals, teachers, and students revealed that reading corners facilitate good habits, encourage reading independence, and instill character values such as integrity and mutual cooperation. These findings align with the theory proposed by Lickona (1991), which states that character education encompasses three key elements: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Through activities in the reading corner, students gain moral knowledge from the reading materials provided, experience moral feelings during discussions with peers, and practice moral behavior by maintaining order in the reading corner and respecting reading time. For example, students demonstrate independence by coming to the reading corner on their own and choosing books of interest without being prompted by the teacher. This demonstrates that character building can occur naturally through literacy habits. Furthermore, these findings align with indicators from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), which state that reading corners are part of the School Literacy Movement and play a role in instilling character values through a culture of enjoyable reading. At SDN 3 Mrayan, the reading corner in each classroom is regularly used by students, even outside of class hours. The principal stated that this reading corner is not only a medium to foster reading interest but also a tool to instill positive values such as responsibility, honesty, and cooperation. Compared with other research, this study's findings align with the findings of Widianita (2023), who concluded that the reading corner serves as a literacy space that fosters student character, particularly a sense of responsibility and independence. However, in the context of SDN 3 Mrayan, greater emphasis is placed on the character dimensions of mutual cooperation and integrity. Therefore, this study's contribution is to broaden understanding of the role of the reading corner, not only in improving literacy but also as a vehicle for strengthening character education comprehensively in the context of elementary schools in rural areas.

Theoretically, this finding confirms that character strengthening through the reading corner can be achieved through habituation strategies. This aligns with Piaget's view that elementary school-aged students are in the concrete operational stage and learn more effectively through real-life experiences. Routine activities in the reading corner provide these experiences directly. The implication of this finding is the importance of making reading corners part of a character learning strategy, not just a means of additional reading.

Obstacles in Implementing Reading Corners to Strengthen Students' Character Education at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo

The research results indicate that the implementation of the reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan faces several obstacles that hinder its optimal role in strengthening students' character education. Interviews with the principal, teachers, and students revealed that the limited book collection, the lack of dedicated staff to manage the reading corner, and the lack of variety in reading activities were the main challenges. Furthermore, the principal also stated that these obstacles were closely related to the school's limited budget. These findings suggest that the implementation of the reading corner is still not supported by an adequate management system. Teachers acknowledged that they were unable to provide dedicated support due to limited time and teaching load. Meanwhile, students complained about the limited collection of books, which quickly bored them. The lack of varied activities, such as discussions or literacy competitions, also prevented reading from becoming a universally enjoyable habit. Thus, the reading corner's potential as a character-building tool has not been fully realized.

In theoretical terms, this aligns with guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), which state that the success of a reading corner is influenced by several factors, including a diversity of reading materials, good management, and support from the school. If any of these aspects are not met, the impact will be directly visible on students' reading interest and character development. This theory is reinforced by Mulyasa's (2019) theory, which states that character education will only be successful if supported by a consistent and high-quality learning environment. Similar obstacles were also found in research by Rumakaway et al. (2022), which stated that reading corners in elementary schools face obstacles such as limited reading books and a lack of dedicated staff. However, in Rumakaway's research, the obstacles were more technical in nature. Unlike this study, the obstacles identified were not only technical but also directly impacted the limited character values that can be formed through reading corner activities. This demonstrates that managing reading corners is not simply a matter of providing facilities but also related to structured and sustainable program planning.

The implication of these findings is the importance of stronger institutional support from schools and local governments to strengthen the presence of reading corners. Funding limitations should be addressed through collaboration with external parties, such as parents, literacy communities, or mobile libraries. Furthermore, the need to appoint a rotating assistant teacher or student in charge could be an alternative solution to the lack of dedicated staff. A limitation of this study is the lack of a more in-depth managerial analysis of school policies related to literacy and character education. Further research could explore this aspect in more detail.

The Impact of the Reading Corner on Strengthening Student Character Education at SDN 3 Mrayan

The findings of this study indicate that the presence of a reading corner at SDN 3 Mrayan has a positive impact on the formation and strengthening of students' character values, particularly in three key indicators: independence, integrity, and mutual cooperation. Interview data with fifth and sixth grade students indicate that they are becoming accustomed to reading without being asked, maintaining honesty when borrowing and returning books, and helping each other while reading together in the reading corner. Teachers and the principal also stated that students have become more independent and disciplined in reading

activities, and have a better appreciation of time. From the aspect of independence, students demonstrate the ability to manage their reading time independently, choose books according to their interests, and care for books without constant supervision by teachers. This indicates that the reading corner has contributed to fostering a sense of self-responsibility. In terms of integrity, students are accustomed to being honest when borrowing books, do not hide damage to books, and recognize the importance of maintaining shared property. Meanwhile, in terms of mutual cooperation, students often read in groups, discuss the content of the reading, and help each other in selecting or returning books. These activities indicate the existence of strong social value habits. From the perspective of Lickona's (1991) character theory, these three values represent concrete manifestations of the internalization of moral values that occur through action (moral action). Independence reflects moral knowledge and the decision to act without coercion. Integrity demonstrates consistency between believed values and actions. Meanwhile, mutual cooperation is the result of moral feelings that encourage empathy, caring, and collaboration. All three are the result of consistent positive habits, as Piaget also emphasized regarding the importance of real-life experiences in shaping attitudes in elementary school-aged children.

These findings reinforce the research by Safrina et al. (2023), which states that student involvement in literacy activities at school can improve discipline, honesty, and responsibility.

The difference, however, is that this study emphasizes the role of the reading corner as a simple facility that still has a significant influence on character formation. This demonstrates that the impact of character education does not always require luxurious facilities; rather, it can simply be achieved through consistently managed media. The implication of these results is that the reading corner can be an important strategy in character education if managed well. Teachers and schools need to develop more varied supporting activities, such as shared reading, creating story synopses, or role-playing based on the reading content. This will strengthen the affective and social impact of the reading corner. A limitation of this study is that the impacts found were qualitative, narrative, and therefore unable to measure the extent of the reading corner's influence quantitatively. Future research could employ a mixed-methods approach to obtain more comprehensive data.

After discussing the three main focuses of this study, which include the role of the reading corner in strengthening the character values of independence, integrity, and mutual cooperation among students at SDN 3 Mrayan Ngrayun Ponorogo, this section presents a more systematic analysis of the results. This analysis is based on data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation, and focuses on indicators of success for each character value explored in the reading corner activities at the school. The presentation of this analysis table is expected to provide a more complete, structured, and easily understood picture.

Table 1. Character Value Analysis Table

Analysis Variables	Indicator Questions	Field Findings
Independence	1. Do students read voluntarily without being told?	Yes, most students read on their own initiative; many start reading before class.
	2. Are students able to choose reading materials based on their own interests?	Yes, students are free to choose books based on their interests (story, knowledge, religion) and appear enthusiastic.

Analysis Variables	Indicator Questions	Field Findings
	3. Are students disciplined in returning books to their proper places after use?	Yes, students are accustomed to returning books; peers remind each other if someone forgets.
Integrity	1. Are students honest when borrowing and caring for books?	Yes, students report damaged or folded books and strive to maintain the condition of the books.
	2. Do students obey the rules for using the reading corner?	Yes, borrowing rules, time, and order are adhered to; teachers foster this habit.
	3. Are students willing to admit mistakes if they damage or lose books?	Yes, students are willing to admit and apologize; problems are resolved through discussion.
Analysis Variables	4. Do students help each other choose reading materials?	Yes, students help their peers choose books that suit their interests/reading abilities.
	5. Do students discuss or share stories about the reading material with their friends?	Yes, after reading, students often share stories and ask short questions in small groups.
	6. 6. Do students work together to keep the reading corner clean and tidy?	Yes, students tidy up shelves, decorate, and clean the reading area in turns/simultaneously after use.

Source: Researcher Data

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that although reading corners have played a role in strengthening students' character education, several obstacles remain that need to be addressed and addressed to ensure their role can be more optimal. Therefore, several recommendations for improvements or solutions are needed to increase the effectiveness of the reading corner's role in supporting sustainable student character development.

Recommendations for Improvement/Research Problem Solving

1. Gradual and Creative Procurement of Reading Books

   Given that limited funding is a major obstacle, schools can seek to procure reading books through alternative channels, such as book donation programs from parents, alumni, or by joining a literacy community. Additionally, teachers can utilize digital reading resources or create mini-books (big books/picture stories) with students as a form of creativity and meaningful learning.

2. Appointment of a Person in Charge/Manager of the Reading Corner

   Because there is currently no dedicated person responsible for managing the reading corner, schools are advised to appoint one teacher or form a small team to manage the reading corner as a whole. In addition, class teachers can also appoint a student or group of students on a rotating basis to act as coordinator or caretaker of the reading corner in their respective classes. This mechanism not only lightens the teacher's supervisory duties but also serves as a learning tool for students to develop responsibility and independence through direct involvement in classroom literacy activities.

3. Developing a Variety of Literacy Activities in the Reading Corner

   The lack of variety in reading corner activities is one obstacle that can reduce student interest and engagement. These activities can be creatively packaged, such as the "Reading and Creating" program where students draw or rewrite stories they have read, the creation of a "Class Literacy Tree" to visualize reading progress, and the "Review Corner" where students post short reviews of their favorite books. Furthermore, inter-class literacy competitions such as "The Most Skilled Reading Class" or "Weekly Book Star" can be held periodically to foster a passion for reading through a healthy and competitive atmosphere. Teachers can also integrate reading activities with other subjects, so that the reading corner becomes not only a place to read, but also a fun and

interactive learning space. With this variety of activities, students will be more enthusiastic and feel that the reading corner is an important part of their daily learning activities.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of *reading corners* is not without challenges, including limited operational resources, a diverse collection of books aligned with character values, management that remains entirely the responsibility of class teachers due to the lack of dedicated staff, and a limited variety of literacy activities, resulting in some students not being fully engaged. Furthermore, funding is still limited, requiring the school to be creative in finding alternatives, such as collaborating with parents or literacy communities. *Reading corners* have a positive impact on student character development. The value of independence is developed through the habit of reading without coercion, choosing reading material based on interests, and having the courage to present the contents of the reading material to the class. Integrity is evident in students' honesty when reporting damaged books, adhering to the rules for using the *reading corner*, and avoiding dishonest behavior. The character value of cooperation or *gotong royong* (mutual assistance) is manifested through the habit of working together to decorate the *reading corner*, tidying up books together, and helping friends understand the reading material. These impacts demonstrate that *reading corners* not only improve literacy but also effectively shape the character desired by the school.

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