



# Smart Librarians: Transformational Leadership Strategies in Improving School Literacy Programs

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## Abstract

The success of a school literacy program is not only determined by the availability of learning resources, but also by the librarian's transformational leadership strategy in inspiring, motivating and building a sustainable literacy culture. This study aims to interpret the leadership strategies of school librarians in improving a more effective literacy culture and can be a reference for other schools. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study type. By conducting document analysis to collect supporting data using Milles and Huberman's analysis technique. The results prove that the librarian's transformational leadership strategy in improving the school literacy program in one of the high schools in Indonesia is with the Smaring program likes to read, Library Ambassadors and a hybrid system that combines print and digital media through platforms. This research explores in depth that a smart librarian, applying transformational leadership has significant benefits in developing a culture of literacy in the school environment. It is not just a library manager but an agent of change who is able to inspire, motivate and guide the school community. Thus, it can provide a literacy strategy that can be adopted by schools in Indonesia or even around the world.

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## INTRODUCTION

The success of school literacy programs does not only depend on the provision of learning resources, but is determined by the librarian's transformational leadership strategy in inspiring, motivating and building a sustainable literacy culture (Afifah et al., 2020; Antoro, 2017; Rahmawaty & Karwanto, 2021; Zohriah, 2017). Transformational leadership focuses not only on library administration, but also on developing a dynamic and sustainable literacy ecosystem (Aryani & Purnomo, 2023; Iqbal, 2024; Safitri et al., 2024). Schools with librarians who apply transformational leadership tend to have higher levels of student engagement in literacy activities, increased interest in reading, and more optimal utilization of library resources (Ahyar & Zumrotun, 2023; Lo et al., 2020; Lutfiati, 2024; Rohar & Anggraeni, 2024).

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The success of school literacy programs is strongly influenced by the transformational leadership of librarians who not only manage the library but also build a dynamic literacy ecosystem, thereby increasing student engagement, reading interest and optimal resource utilization (Sintasari & Salisnawati, 2023).

Research on the transformative leadership strategies of school librarians has shown that librarians' commitment to developing innovative programs is their effort to encourage teachers and students to model reading behavior (Ashiq et al., 2021; Idris, 2024; Irawati et al., 2024). Librarians' transformational leadership strategies are crucial in building a culture of literacy in schools as they encourage innovation and inspiration for teachers and students (Rahayu & Iskandar, 2023; Rifad et al., 2023). With a strong commitment to developing innovative literacy programs, librarians not only provide learning resources but also act as agents of change who shape reading habits in the school environment (Artanto, 2022; Rifad et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2022). Studies by found that when librarians actively collaborated with teachers to incorporate literacy in learning, there was a significant increase in students' reading interest and literacy comprehension. Therefore, librarians' transformational leadership strategies play a crucial role in building a culture of literacy in schools by encouraging innovation, collaboration and inspiration, thereby increasing students' reading interest and literacy comprehension (Samah et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study is to interpret the leadership strategies of school librarians to improve a more effective literacy culture and can be used as a reference by other schools. Analyzing and understanding the leadership approach of school librarians in optimizing the role of the library can be used as a reference or view to create a more dynamic and sustainable literacy culture. School librarian leadership strategies in improving literacy culture need to be interpreted in depth so that they can be implemented effectively and replicated by other schools (Asmawan, 2018; Dewi et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2023). By understanding successful strategies, schools can adapt approaches to suit their own needs and challenges, making literacy programs more sustainable and impactful. Schools that adopt librarian leadership strategies from other successful institutions have shown increased access and more optimal utilization of library resources (A'yunin, 2019; Nafis, 2020; Putra, 2018). Thus, interpreting the leadership strategies of school librarians in improving literacy culture is essential so that they can be implemented effectively, replicated by other schools, and have a wider and sustainable impact.

Librarian transformational leadership strategies in improving school literacy programs can be carried out through the smaring program, library ambassadors and hybrid library learning. Because the librarian's transformational leadership strategy in improving school literacy programs needs to be implemented through an innovative and sustainable approach (Lutfiati, 2024). Programs such as Smaring program likes to read, library ambassadors, and hybrid library learning are able to create a literacy environment that is more interesting, participatory, and in accordance with technological developments, so that students are more motivated to read and make optimal use of the library. community-based literacy programs have a more significant impact on the surrounding people (Saputra & Sari, 2023). Library ambassadors, for example, are effective in enhancing students' roles as literacy agents who inspire peers. Hybrid library learning, which combines digital and physical libraries, can improve students' accessibility to reading materials and strengthen their digital literacy skills, and smaring programs that encourage reading habits in the school

environment have been shown to significantly increase students' involvement in literacy activities.

About the transformational leadership strategy of school librarians provides relevant implications that the role of librarians as literacy leaders, increasing student interest in reading, strengthening school literacy culture, as well as technology integration in literacy are more innovative and sustainable. The novelty in this study not only describes the role of librarians in literacy, but also introduces innovative and sustainability-oriented transformational leadership strategies for school literacy.

## METHODS

This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen because it allows in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of librarian leadership in a specific context, namely a high school in Indonesia, namely Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi East Java. Case studies allow researchers to understand the dynamics of librarian leadership, the strategies implemented and their impact on school literacy programs. By focusing on in-depth exploration, this design is expected to provide rich and detailed insights into the phenomenon under study (Mahira et al., 2024; Sandra et al., 2024; Syafril et al., 2021; Wahdah et al., 2024). The main source of information in this study was the librarian of the State Senior High School 1 Cluring. Additional information was obtained from students, teachers and the principal to understand the perception and impact of the literacy program developed. Secondary data, such as literacy program documents, activity reports and library management records, were also used to complement the primary data. With this combination of information sources, the study is expected to provide a holistic picture of the phenomenon under study.

The analysis method refers to the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which allows researchers to transform raw data into meaningful information through analysis techniques such as data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing (Engkizar et al., 2024; Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024; Wyananda et al., 2022; Yusnita et al., 2018). Data analysis in this study used the Miles and Huberman method which includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, information from interviews with librarians, teachers and students was filtered to highlight relevant aspects, namely the role of librarians in inspiring literacy, collaboration strategies with teachers and the use of technology in literacy, while less relevant data was eliminated. Next, in the data presentation stage, the findings were categorized under the main themes of the librarian's leadership as a literacy agent, literacy program innovation, collaboration with teachers and the use of technology, which were reinforced with interview excerpts and observation results. In conclusion, the study showed that the librarian's transformational leadership based on innovation, collaboration and technology significantly improved the school's literacy culture, with evidence of increased student engagement in reading and optimized library utilization.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The transformation of librarian management in the digital era reflects adaptation in classification systems, increased competence, and innovation in library services. Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi East Java gradually maintained the manual method as the main strategy due to limited manpower.

While digital applications such as InLIS Lite and Smaring E Cakrawala Cerdas began to be integrated to improve the efficiency of collection management. In addition, innovations in human resource management, such as library ambassador training and the Smaring program likes to read, also strengthen the culture of literacy in schools. Thus, this transformation does not only focus on the technical aspects of administration, but also plays a role in creating a more dynamic learning environment that supports the needs of students in the digital era.

### **The existence of the Smaring program loves to read**

Literacy culture in schools does not only grow from the availability of books, but from systematic efforts in building sustainable reading habits (Aryani & Purnomo, 2023). Systematic efforts such as structured reading programs, teacher involvement in guiding students and school policies that encourage reading habits will help create an effective literacy culture. students' reading motivation increases when they are involved in systematic literacy programs and supported by a conducive learning environment. A strong literacy culture in schools depends not only on the availability of books but also on the implementation of systematic and sustainable strategies (Aryani & Purnomo, 2023; Lutfiati, 2024). Structured reading programs, the active role of teachers and school policies that support reading habits have proven effective in increasing students' interest and understanding of literacy. Therefore, synergy between schools, teachers and the learning environment is needed to create a conducive and sustainable literacy ecosystem. This is evidenced by the Smaring program likes to read created and implemented at Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi East Java.

Based on data obtained in the field, the Smaring Gemar Membaca program is one of the literacy programs created by Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi East Java. Each student is required to read a book for approximately 15 minutes before the start of teaching and learning activities. The implementation of this program is carried out every Tuesday to Thursday. Various types of books, both fiction and nonfiction, are read according to the interests of each student. Students are given a sheet at the beginning of each month to fill in every day after reading, by recording a summary of the book they have read for 15 minutes and learning the new vocabulary they have acquired. The data will be checked at the end of the month. Anyone who fails to do so will receive a reprimand or even strict sanctions. The Smaring Gemar Membaca program has been running for approximately 5 years. As stated by the following informant.

*As the principal, I strongly support the Smaring program likes to read. We provide a variety of books, both fiction and nonfiction, which students can choose according to their interests. In addition, we also conduct monitoring by evaluating students' reading summaries every month. This helps us know the extent to which students understand their reading as well as how their vocabulary is developing. Although there are challenges such as the lack of literacy awareness in some students, we still run this program with the support of teachers and schools (informant 1)*

Thus giving rise to a similar expression, this was conveyed by the informant as follows.

*We created and implemented the Smaring program likes to read as a strategic step in building a culture of literacy at school. We realize that the availability of books alone is not enough, so we made a policy of reading 15 minutes before the lesson starts. Hopefully, this habit can increase students' interest in reading and shape their critical thinking. We also try to involve all elements of the school, including teachers and*

*librarians, so that the program is effective and sustainable (informant 2)*

The argument was also conveyed by students of State Senior High School 1 Cluring, this was expressed by the informant as follows.

*I initially found the program a bit boring, but over time I got used to it and actually enjoyed reading books before class. It makes it easier for me to understand what I'm reading, I find a lot of new vocabulary, and I'm even more confident when I have to explain the content of the books I read. But sometimes, there are also friends who just read without really understanding the content (informant 3)*

From these interviews, it can be concluded that the Smaring program likes to read has a positive impact on literacy culture at Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi, although it still faces challenges in student discipline and literacy awareness. However, with the support of the school, as well as the librarian, the program continues to run and provides tangible benefits in increasing students' interest in reading and understanding of literacy.

### **Librarian Ambassador**

Effective library management depends not only on professional librarians, but also on the active role of librarian ambassadors in building a culture of literacy in the school environment (Ernawati, 2019; Hidayat et al., 2025; Rachman & Rachman, 2019; Sumanti & Fauziah, 2018). Librarian ambassadors act as liaisons between the library and other students, assisting in literacy promotion, collection management and creating a more inclusive reading environment (Apriliya & Ali, 2024; Hasnah, 2024). With librarian ambassadors, literacy is not only the responsibility of library personnel but also part of the school culture involving the whole community. students' involvement in library activities can increase access to and more optimal utilization of library resources. In addition, the study of the librarian ambassador program involving students was able to increase literacy awareness and encourage peer reading interest. So librarian ambassadors have a strategic role in library management and strengthening literacy culture in schools by increasing student involvement, access to resources, and building an inclusive and sustainable reading environment (Gifari et al., 2024; Tamyis, 2022; Walid et al., 2020).

The following are the results of interviews conducted by the author of the existence of Library ambassadors at Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi together with the head librarian, this was conveyed by the informant as follows.

*Library ambassadors play a very important role in assisting the management of school libraries. They not only help with the borrowing and returning of books, but also contribute to creating a comfortable and conducive library environment. In addition, they are active in inviting their friends to visit more often and utilize the library facilities. This program is very helpful for us, considering the limited number of library staff (informant 4)*

Another opinion was also conveyed by one of the teachers, this was conveyed by the informant as follows.

*I see the library ambassadors having a positive impact on the literacy culture in the school. Not only do they help run the library, but they also set an example for other students in utilizing the library as a learning resource. In addition, with the regular picket system, the library has become more organized and comfortable to visit. However, the challenge that remains is how to ensure that all library ambassadors remain committed to carrying out their duties well (informant 5)*

The results of the interview were corroborated by the opinion of one of the library ambassador members, this was conveyed by the informant as



follows.

*Being a library ambassador gave me valuable experience. We learned how to manage the library, record books, and help our friends find the books they need. In addition, we are also responsible for maintaining order and comfort in the library. The pickets that we do every day during break time are divided into two sessions, namely the service session and the book data collection session. Sometimes it feels tiring, but I feel happy that I can contribute to increasing students' interest in reading at school* (informant 6)

From these interviews, it can be concluded that the library ambassador program at Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi East Java provides significant benefits in improving the quality of library services as well as building a culture of literacy among students. The library ambassadors not only assist in daily operations, but also act as literacy agents who are active in promoting reading habits in the school environment.

Based on the data obtained in the field, the Library Ambassadors of Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi East Java have an important role in maintaining and improving the quality of the school library. The ambassadors' tasks are not only limited to helping with routine library activities, but also contribute to creating a comfortable environment and encouraging students' interest in reading.

### Hybrid Library Learning

Hybrid library learning is not simply the merging of physical and digital libraries, but an adaptive strategy to improve accessibility and effectiveness of learning in the digital era (Afrilia, 2024; Bjola & Manor, 2022; Daruhadi & Sopiati, 2024). With the combination of print and digital collections, students and educators can access information anytime and anywhere, improving learning effectiveness (Irfandari & Sa'diyah, 2024). In addition, this model supports a variety of learning styles, both for those who are more comfortable with physical books and those who are more accustomed to digital resources (Wasilah et al., 2025). Hybrid library learning increases accessibility and flexibility in learning by providing resources in multiple formats. Therefore, hybrid library learning is an adaptive strategy that integrates physical and digital libraries to increase accessibility, flexibility, and effectiveness of learning according to diverse needs and learning styles. The results of interviews obtained by the author regarding the hybrid library learning system are as follows: interview with the head librarian, this was conveyed by the informant as follows.

*We started implementing a hybrid library system in 2024 by combining physical and digital collections. Currently, we use the InLIS Lite and Smaring E Cakrawala Cerdas applications developed by the National Library. However, due to the limited number of tech-savvy librarians, access to these applications is still limited to library staff, teachers and library ambassadors. We hope that in the future all students can also access it more easily* (informant 7)

A similar opinion was also conveyed by one of the teachers who had used the school digital application, this was conveyed by the informant as follows.

*Hybrid libraries provide convenience for us as educators. We can search for references digitally without having to come directly to the library. However, there are still obstacles because students cannot fully access the application. I hope there will be training for students so that they can be more independent in utilizing the available digital resources* (informant 8)

From the results of these interviews, it can be concluded that hybrid library learning at Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi has started to be

implemented, but still faces challenges in accessibility and utilization of digital technology by students. Further efforts, such as training and expanding access, are needed so that this system can be more effective in improving digital literacy in the school environment.

Based on the data obtained in the field, Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi has implemented a hybrid library system (combination), namely with print and digital media. In digital media, Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi is currently still using two applications, namely InLIS Lite and Smaring E Smart Horizons, which were created by the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia or known as *Perpusnas*. The system with digital media itself was only implemented in 2024, due to the lack of library employees to be able to operate the application. The application for now can only be accessed by library officers, teachers and library ambassadors. However, other students can still access the library with print media or books.

## CONCLUSION

Literacy culture in Indonesian senior high schools is developed through a systematic strategy that includes the Smaring program likes to read, the active role of librarian ambassadors and the implementation of Hybrid Library Learning. Smaring program likes to read requires students to read before learning. The program is held every Tuesday-Thursday with regular recording to ensure consistency of reading habits. Librarian ambassadors play a role in assisting library management, providing services to students and creating an inclusive literacy environment. In addition, the library of Senior High School 1 Cluring Banyuwangi has implemented a hybrid system that combines print and digital media through platforms such as InLIS Lite and Smaring E Smart Horizons, although it still faces obstacles in operations and expanding access for students. These literacy efforts show that the success of the library does not only depend on professional librarians but also requires the involvement of students, teachers and supportive school policies. With synergy between various parties, a culture of literacy can develop sustainably, increasing students' interest in reading and strengthening the library's role as a learning center in the digital era.

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