

CALISTUNG ASSISTANCE IN EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN BASIC LITERACY AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE VILLAGE OF BUGIS TUA INDRAMAYU

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Abstract

Since elementary school, all students must master basic literacy, which includes the ability to read, write, and count, also known as calistung. This research aims to explain how the literacy and numeracy mentoring program is used to improve the basic literacy of elementary school students in Bugis Tua Village. This activity uses the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. One research model that attempts to connect research with social change is participatory action research. The results of this study indicate that implementing calistung activities for 12 days can help children's development. Children can learn to read, starting from spelling letters to words. On the other hand, children are able to distinguish between vowels and consonants, dictate letters, and recognize punctuation in every piece of writing. They can memorize multiplication and are proficient in addition. This study concludes that the Calistung (reading, writing, and arithmetic) mentoring program aimed at strengthening basic literacy skills of elementary school students in Bugis Tua Village, Indramayu, has proven to have a positive impact on improving children's basic skills, both through school learning activities and additional guidance sessions.

Keywords: *Literacy Assistance; Literacy Strengthening; Basic Skills*

A. Introduction

The learning process and outcomes of children are closely related to the term "learning assistance" because assistance is defined as guidance that brings one closer to the desired subject, especially in terms of child learning development techniques. From elementary school onwards, all students must master basic literacy, which includes reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, also known as calistung. Learning letters and numbers begins with calistung. Writing trains fine motor skills in the hands and fingers, reading improves the brain's ability to process data, and arithmetic improves the brain's ability to process data (Seviyanti et al., 2024). These skills help children understand knowledge at a higher level and teach them critical thinking skills that are useful in everyday life. If students do not master calistung well, however, the reality on the ground continues to show that students face significant challenges, especially for those living in rural areas who have not learned basic literacy well. One concrete example can be found in Bugis Tua Village, an area with many elementary school-aged children but facing significant educational limitations. Initial observations show that some students still struggle with basic arithmetic, writing simple sentences, and reading fluently. This situation highlights the significant gap between the educational support and facilities available to these children and their learning needs.

There are several problems faced by students in Bugis Tua Village. First, it appears that students have low basic literacy skills. This can be seen in their difficulty in understanding simple texts, stringing



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words together into sentences, and performing basic calculations such as addition and subtraction (Faizah, R., et al. 2024). Second, due to the large number of students and varying levels of ability, teachers in local elementary schools are limited in their ability to give individual attention to their students. They cannot fully assist students who need help. Third, not many parents are able to help their children study. Most parents work themselves, so they do not have enough time to supervise their children, and they do not always have sufficient education to help them learn. If this is not corrected, there will be long-term effects, such as delays in mastering basic competencies and low quality of learning at the next stage.

Considering this situation, this study was designed with clear objectives. First, to explain how the literacy assistance program was used to improve the basic literacy of elementary school students in Bugis Tua Village. Second, to see whether there were changes or improvements in the reading, writing, and arithmetic skills of students who received assistance. Third, to learn more about how teachers and parents participate in the implementation of this tutoring. Thus, the results of this study can be used as a reference for similar programs in other areas with comparable conditions. Literacy tutoring can improve students' writing, reading, and arithmetic skills and increase their desire to learn (Hevitria & Tohir, 2024; Seviyanti et al., 2024). The material or topics covered in this learning assistance include helping students read one word from each reading book, having students copy and imitate the shapes of letters, and having students calculate the results of addition and subtraction (Seviyanti et al., 2024). As a result, this study can contribute scientifically to the field of basic education in addition to providing practical benefits for students and schools.

Literacy is not merely the technical ability to read and write, but also the ability to understand, interpret, and use information in real life. Previous studies show that literacy is defined in elementary school as the ability of a person or individual to understand and manage information during the process of reading and writing, which is the basis for skills or abilities (Muti'ah et al., 2025). Assistance to individuals or groups who need help from an experienced mentor in a particular field is known as learning assistance (Damanik et al., 2022). It is hoped that learning assistance will help children catch up on their studies and improve their learning outcomes. Rahmawati (2021) found that community-based assistance, which involves the roles of teachers, students, and the community, can reduce the number of children experiencing basic literacy difficulties and create a pleasant learning environment. Another study found that improved literacy in primary education determines children's academic and social abilities. Social interaction is very important for literacy learning and children's cognitive development (Dwi Safitri et al., 2024; Muti'ah et al., 2025). In this case, literacy assistance in primary schools in rural areas requires additional research, as is the case in Bugis Tua Village.

The latest finding in this study is a mentoring approach that emphasizes cooperation between teachers, parents, and students in strengthening students' basic literacy skills. Due to limited educational resources in Bugis Tua Village, this study is relevant and provides added value because it describes the real situation in rural areas. Theoretically, this study will add to the literature on basic literacy mentoring strategies in educational settings with minimal facilities. Meanwhile, in practical terms, this research is expected to provide direct benefits to students by improving their literacy skills. In addition, this research will serve as a reference for schools and village communities in developing basic literacy mentoring programs. This research is not only academically important, but also strategically important for human resource development in rural areas due to the real needs of the target partners and the importance of building a strong foundation in basic literacy as preparation for further education.

B. Method

As part of the Community Service Program (KKN), this Community Service Activity (PKM) focuses on a literacy program (reading, writing, arithmetic) as an effort to improve the basic literacy of elementary school students. This program takes place in Bugis Tua Village, Anjatan District, Indramayu Regency, an area that still faces serious challenges in basic education, particularly in Calistung skills. The choice of the mentoring method is considered relevant because it suits the needs

of rural communities, which are affected by limited educational facilities and complex socio-cultural factors.

This activity uses the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. One research model that attempts to link research with social change is participatory action research (Rahmat & Misnawati, 2020). The research method applied in this activity is Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is a research approach that emphasizes the active involvement of researchers and research subjects in the entire series of activities (Khofsoh & Riani, 2024). The application of the PAR method begins with the stage of introduction and problem formulation, which is carried out through field observation and interviews with school officials, particularly the principal. At this stage, the researchers and the school identified the problems faced by students, namely the limited reading, writing, and arithmetic skills of some lower grade students (Siswadi & Syaifuddin, 2024). The next stage is action planning, which is carried out by collaboratively developing a literacy tutoring program in accordance with the students' needs. Once the plan has been agreed upon, the action stage is implemented through literacy tutoring activities guided by KKN students with the active participation of the students. During the implementation of the activities, the researchers observed the learning process, student responses, and obstacles encountered in the field. The final stage in the PAR cycle is reflection, which is an evaluation of the program's implementation to assess the level of success of the activities and formulate improvements for the next implementation.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation techniques (Putri & Sembiring, 2021). The data obtained were then analyzed through several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researchers sorted and focused on data relevant to the research objectives, particularly those related to students' literacy skills and the school's response to the program implemented. Next, the data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives to systematically describe the process and results of the activities. The final stage of analysis was drawing conclusions, which was done through comprehensive data interpretation to obtain an overview of the effectiveness of the PAR method in improving students' basic literacy and numeracy skills. The data analysis process was carried out continuously along with the implementation of activities as part of the reflection stage in the PAR method.

This approach emphasizes the active involvement of KKN students, teachers, and elementary school students. The implementation will take place on August 4-15, 2025, every day from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Western Indonesian Time, with stages that include identifying literacy problems, developing learning strategies, providing direct and interactive assistance, and evaluating and reflecting on student progress. This approach is participatory, interactive, and tailored to local characteristics, so it is expected to create a learning experience that is both enjoyable and beneficial for students. To support the activity, data were obtained through observation, simple interviews with teachers and students, and documentation in the form of photos, notes, and activity archives. The collected data were then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. In this way, the PKM activity not only illustrates the effectiveness of Calistung mentoring, but also makes a real contribution to efforts to strengthen basic literacy and build sustainable learning patterns for children in Bugis Tua Village.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

The Calistung mentoring activities carried out in Bugis Tua Village, Anjatan District, Indramayu Regency, showed an increase in basic literacy skills among elementary school students, particularly in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Through the application of Participatory Action Research (PAR), students were not only positioned as recipients of learning, but also actively participated in every process of the activities. Field observations showed that children who initially had difficulty recognizing letters and stringing together simple words were gradually able to read

short sentences more fluently. Similar progress was also seen in arithmetic skills, where students began to feel more confident in completing simple addition and subtraction operations. Documentation in the form of photos and progress notes showed an increase in student motivation, participation, and confidence. These results confirm that Calistung assistance has a positive impact on strengthening the basic literacy of children in rural areas.

These findings contribute both theoretically and practically. From an academic perspective, the results of this study prove that participation-based learning strategies can improve basic literacy skills, in line with theories that emphasize the importance of direct student involvement in learning experiences. This study adds empirical evidence from the context of rural education, which has received little attention. On the other hand, from a practical standpoint, this research can serve as a reference for teachers to develop more interactive guidance methods, for students in community service programs to strengthen their capacity in the field of community education, and for village governments to develop more sustainable community-based education programs. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of theory but also provides concrete benefits in learning practices.

The results show that this study still has a number of limitations. The short duration of the study, which was only 12 days (August 4–15, 2025), meant that it was not able to capture the long-term development of students' literacy. The limited number of participants also restricted the scope of the findings, making it difficult to generalize them to a wider population. In addition, the role of the researcher as a facilitator has the potential to cause bias in the data collection and interpretation process. Therefore, the results of this study need to be read with these limitations in mind so as not to draw excessive conclusions.

Based on these limitations, future research should be conducted over a longer period to obtain a more comprehensive picture of students' literacy development. The use of quantitative instruments such as standardized reading and arithmetic tests is also important to complement the qualitative data obtained through observation and interviews. In addition, the involvement of parents and the surrounding community is highly recommended, given that support from the home environment is an important factor in the success of children's literacy learning. Further research could also explore the use of simple technology, such as audio-visual-based digital learning media, to enrich the Calistung tutoring method in rural areas.

2. Discussion

Calistung is an acronym for reading, writing, and arithmetic, which are essential basic skills for early childhood. In the context of parenting, introducing calistung is also part of the role of parents in supporting their children's readiness to learn, particularly through learning assistance at home (Rasyade & Voutama, 2025). The reading, writing, and arithmetic tutoring activities (calistung) aimed at elementary school students in grades 1 to 3 were carried out with the enthusiastic and cheerful participation of the students. These activities were guided by students participating in the Community Service Program (KKN), who acted as facilitators in the learning process. The methods used include direct mentoring, small group learning, and simple exercises tailored to each student's ability level. The calistung learning model is intended to train students who experience difficulties in reading, writing, and arithmetic. This learning program was carried out in the school library during break time for about 10 minutes. The implementation of the calistung learning model in groups proved to be able to increase student activity in participating in the learning process (Kusuma & Sari, 2023).

To support the effectiveness of the activities, interviews were also conducted with the school principal. The results of the interviews showed that there were still a number of students in lower grades who had difficulties in reading and writing, so additional assistance outside of formal learning hours was needed. The principal also responded positively to the implementation of literacy tutoring by KKN students because it was considered to be able to help improve students' basic literacy and numeracy skills and encourage increased motivation to learn. The findings from these interviews were

used as a basis for planning and implementing the tutoring program to suit the needs of students at the school.

The methods used in the literacy tutoring activities in Bugis Tua Village were as follows:

a. Preparation

One component of the teaching program is lesson preparation, which includes the topics to be presented in repeated meetings or face-to-face sessions. Lesson preparation can be used as a basis for creating lesson plans and helping teachers carry out learning activities in a more focused and effective manner. Preparation is the act of getting ready or designing a plan for something (Dwi Puji Astuti et al., 2020). It is possible to prepare by gathering preliminary information about the conditions of the children in Bugis Tua Village. These conditions include a lack of education and the high influence of electronic devices, which cause children to become lazy in their studies. In addition, learning at school seems monotonous, which makes children easily bored.

b. Planning

Planning is essentially the process of determining what will be done later with the aim of managing various resources so that the expected results can be achieved (Arifudin et al., 2021). In this case, it shows that during the planning process, efforts are made to utilize human resources, natural resources, and other resources to achieve the objectives. In order for this program to be realized optimally, structured and systematic planning is required, including:

1. Preparation of an activity proposal as a basis for conducting observations and providing assistance with literacy in Bugis Tua Village.
2. Analysis of the urgency of the program aimed at increasing student motivation to learn and minimizing dependence on the use of gadgets among elementary school children.
3. Determination of the activity schedule accompanied by the submission of official permits to the relevant authorities through coordination with village officials who provide support facilities for the activities.
4. Preparing the necessary facilities and infrastructure to support the continuity of literacy activities.
5. Conducting observations accompanied by permission requests at SDN 1 Bugis Tua.
6. Implementing the literacy assistance program directly in Bugis Tua Village as a form of realization of the planned design.

c. Observation

The observation method is a data collection technique conducted by directly observing the object being studied, accompanied by systematic recording of the conditions and behavior of the target object (Gabdimas, 2023). As observed at SDN 1 Bugis Tua, the observation was conducted when the KKN students explained the purpose and objectives of the activity to the principal of SDN 1 Bugis Tua. They also implemented calistung at the KKN Group 3 student post in Bugis Tua Village, Kandang Sapi 1 hamlet. This activity was intended for students in Bugis Tua village who were in grades one to three of elementary school. KKN students, especially those from the Islamic Education Management Study Program, carried out Calistung activities every Monday to Friday from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Observations were conducted one week prior, including obtaining permission from village officials, determining the Calistung location, setting objectives, identifying topics of interest for learning, and ascertaining whether the children enjoyed participating in the activity, which helped boost their enthusiasm for learning. The following week, the Calistung activity was conducted in Bugis Tua Village.



Figure 1 illustrates the observation activity at SDN 1 Bugis Tua, which was conducted together with the school principal. The purpose of this observation was to obtain an initial overview of the school environment, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, and the learning process. Through these observation activities, researchers can identify factors that support or hinder the learning process, while also establishing initial communication with the school as part of the preparation stage for research or community service activities. These observation activities play an important role in understanding the overall conditions and context of the school before further activities are carried out.



Figure 2 shows the interaction between mentors and students in the classroom at SDN 1 Bugis Tua. This activity reflects the process of direct mentoring and coaching of students, in which mentors provide guidance, direction, and motivation in a conducive learning environment. The interaction shows two-way communication that encourages students to actively participate in learning activities. Through this mentoring, students are expected to improve their understanding of the subject matter and develop self-confidence and motivation to learn in the school environment.

d. Implementation of activities

This community service activity is carried out through peer tutoring. With peer tutors, children are not only taught but also become subjects of learning. Students are invited to act as tutors, learning resources, and sources of information for their friends. Thus, children who teach gain a better understanding of the material because they repeat and re-explain the material.



Figure 3 illustrates the implementation of reading, writing, and arithmetic tutoring in Bugis Tua Village. Tutoring is conducted in groups in a conducive learning environment and involves the active participation of students, where children receive direct guidance from tutors according to their respective skill levels. During the activity, the children actively participated in reading, writing, and doing simple exercises together. This mentoring pattern encourages interaction between mentors and children, thereby improving their understanding of the material through repetition and direct explanation. The activity aims to develop children's basic literacy and numeracy skills and increase their motivation to learn in a supportive environment. The techniques used in the calistung tutoring activities are as follows:

1. Reading Techniques

Phonetic methods, syllables, and letter cards are used to help children learn to read. They are first taught vowels and consonants. After that, they are taught to put letters together to form simple words and read short sentences, grouped according to the children's abilities or grade levels. Picture storybooks and interactive reading games are used to increase interest.

2. Writing Techniques

KKN students use exercises in copying letters, words, and simple sentences in the writing section. In addition, children are trained to write independently by writing their names, short sentences, and retelling stories they have read. The tools used include notebooks, small whiteboards, and worksheets tailored to the children's abilities.

3. Counting Techniques

Counting activities are carried out using concrete, semi-concrete, and abstract techniques. In the early stages, children use real objects (such as cards) to help them understand the concept of quantity. Next, counting exercises are developed through number games, counting cards, and interesting simple questions (such as coloring according to the answer), memorizing multiplication by adjusting the level of the child's ability involving addition, subtraction, and multiplication.

e. Mentoring and Evaluation

This evaluative study aims to obtain a comprehensive overview of the implementation of character education programs applied by teachers and schools. This study focuses on examining various important aspects of the evaluation process. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference and basis for the development of future programs (Wahid, 2024). Monitoring and evaluation are carried out to monitor how activities are implemented and whether they are in accordance with the plan. Evaluators can also help village officials, the community, and community service program students improve the math and reading skills of children in Bugis Tua Village. The evaluation is carried out by looking at the children's progress, such as the scores they obtain while

participating in literacy activities. Rewards are given to children who obtain the highest scores and are diligent in participating in literacy activities from the beginning to the end of the program. Children are also given motivation to continue to be enthusiastic in all things, especially in education.

The results achieved were that parents and children responded very positively, and they wanted to go to the KKN post where the literacy program was held, rather than playing with gadgets or playing with friends. The implementation of the literacy program for 12 days can help children's development. Children can read from spelling letters to words. On the other hand, children are able to distinguish between vowels and consonants, dictate letters, and know punctuation marks in each writing. They can memorize multiplication and are proficient in addition, subtraction, and counting tens, hundreds, and even thousands. Additionally, it helps children develop logical thinking skills, particularly by maximizing the function of the left hemisphere of the brain. Given the importance of *calistung*, teachers at school should not be solely responsible for the learning process. The role of parents is crucial for the success of their children. Children can be educated according to their aspirations and become a source of pride for the nation and themselves.

Socially, this activity has significant implications because it provides additional learning opportunities for children who were previously underserved. This has the potential to reduce the literacy gap between children in rural and urban areas, while strengthening the quality of human resources in the future. From an ethical perspective, the participatory approach shows that the activity was carried out with respect for local values and prioritized the comfort of the students as participants. Thus, the results of this study not only had an impact on improving academic abilities, but also built community awareness of the importance of basic literacy as the foundation for sustainable educational development in Bugis Tua Village.

D. Conclusion

Community service activities carried out through a program of tutoring in reading, writing, and arithmetic (*calistung*) for elementary school students in grades I to III in Bugis Tua Village applied a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. This approach emphasizes the active involvement of KKN students, school officials, and students in every stage of the activity, from identifying problems, developing action plans, implementing mentoring, to evaluation and reflection. Based on field observations and interviews with the school principal, it was found that there were still lower grade students who had difficulties in mastering basic literacy and numeracy, thus requiring additional learning assistance outside of formal learning activities. The literacy and numeracy mentoring was carried out participatively through direct learning methods and group work tailored to the students' ability levels.

The results of the activity showed positive responses from the students, as seen from their increased activity, enthusiasm, and motivation to learn during the activity. In addition, the school expressed its appreciation for the mentoring program, which was considered capable of helping to overcome the limitations in basic learning experienced by some students. The reflection process within the PAR cycle indicates that *calistung* tutoring activities can serve as an effective supplementary alternative for improving the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills of elementary school students.

Thus, the application of the PAR method in this community service activity not only improved students' literacy and numeracy skills but also strengthened cooperation between students, schools, and the community. The PAR approach has proven to be relevant for use in community service activities in the field of education because it is capable of producing contextual programs that are in line with field needs and have the potential for sustainable development.

For the sustainability of the program in the future, mentoring activities should be enriched with continuous socialization and active involvement of teachers and parents in order to maximize the results achieved. Support from schools and the community is also needed to maintain continuity and strengthen a shared sense of responsibility for the program's success. In addition, *Calistung* mentoring should not only emphasize the technical aspects of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also include the development of advanced literacy skills such as reading comprehension, communication skills, and

logical thinking exercises in solving simple problems. With this comprehensive approach, the activity is expected to foster student independence in learning and make a real contribution to improving the quality of basic education in Bugis Tua Village, Indramayu.

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