

Principal Strategies for Improving Students' Literacy Skills

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Abstract: This article analyzes principal strategies for improving students' literacy skills in an integrated Islamic junior high school context. The study was developed from qualitative case study conducted at SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang. The research focused on four main aspects: the planning and implementation of the principal's literacy strategy, the challenges and solutions in program implementation, the principal's leadership role in strengthening literacy culture, and the impact of the strategy on students' literacy development. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving the principal, school supervisor, curriculum vice principal, teachers, students, and parents. The findings show that the principal acted as both an instructional and transformational leader by integrating literacy into school vision, curriculum, classroom learning, Islamic values, and school culture. The main strategy was organized through Penggiat Literasi Al-Furqon (PELITA), including literacy corners, digital literacy, bulletin publication, wall magazines, book writing, and appreciation for active library users. Although the implementation faced challenges related to teacher competence, student reading interest, data-based evaluation, learning time, reading resources, and gadget influence, the school responded through teacher training, peer tutoring, varied literacy methods, strengthened coordination, and parent involvement. The strategy improved students' literacy achievement, participation, confidence, creativity, and learning culture.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Principal Strategy, School Literacy Culture, Students' Literacy, Transformational Leadership

A. Introduction

Literacy is one of the most important competencies required by students in contemporary education. It is no longer limited to the technical ability to read and write. In school practice, literacy includes the ability to understand information, interpret texts, connect ideas, communicate meaning, use digital resources wisely, and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts. Students with strong literacy skills are more prepared to follow classroom learning, participate in discussion, express opinions, solve problems, and build independent learning habits (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi,

2023). For this reason, literacy is closely related to the quality of learning and the quality of school graduates.

In Indonesia, the improvement of literacy remains an important educational concern. Many schools have implemented reading programs, literacy corners, school libraries, digital reading activities, and writing competitions. However, the success of such programs depends not only on the existence of activities, but also on leadership, planning, consistency, teacher readiness, student participation, parental support, and continuous evaluation. A literacy program may fail to produce meaningful change when it is treated as a ceremonial activity or an additional routine separated from curriculum and classroom learning. Therefore, school leadership becomes a decisive factor in transforming literacy from a program into a culture (Mincu, 2022).

The principal occupies a strategic position in the development of school literacy. As the highest leader at the school level, the principal has the authority to formulate policy, organize resources, motivate teachers, coordinate stakeholders, evaluate implementation, and create a learning climate that supports literacy. The principal also functions as an instructional leader because literacy must be connected to classroom teaching. At the same time, the principal functions as a transformational leader because literacy improvement requires changes in habits, attitudes, collaboration, and school culture. The combination of these leadership roles is important for ensuring that literacy development is systematic, sustainable, and meaningful for students (Akinsemolu & Onyeaka, 2025).

The context of SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang is relevant for discussing principal strategies in improving literacy because the school combines national curriculum, school-based programs, and Islamic values. The school does not only aim to improve academic performance, but also to develop students who are intellectually capable, spiritually grounded, and socially responsible. In this context, literacy is expected to support students' ability to read, write, discuss, think critically, use technology, and engage with Islamic values in learning activities (Altinyelken, 2021). The school's vision and mission emphasize reading, writing, discussion, creativity, technological adaptation, and character formation, which make literacy a central part of its educational identity.

Initial conditions showed a clear need for literacy improvement. The school literacy score in the education report was 73.33 percent in 2024, which indicated that literacy achievement still required stronger intervention. Observations also showed that some students visited the library mainly to complete assignments rather than to read voluntarily. Reading habits at home were not evenly developed, and the influence of gadgets and social media became a challenge for maintaining students' reading interest (Yessenbekova et al., 2025). These conditions created a gap between the expected literacy culture and the actual reading practices of students.

Another important issue was the variation in teacher readiness. Some teachers had already integrated literacy into classroom learning through reading activities, discussion, text analysis, and writing assignments. However, implementation across subjects and classes was not fully consistent. Literacy practices were stronger in language-related subjects, while integration in non-language subjects still needed improvement. This condition shows that literacy cannot be strengthened only by asking students to read; it requires teacher competence, appropriate teaching methods, relevant reading materials, structured monitoring, and leadership support from the principal (Merga et al., 2021).

The research gap addressed in this article lies in the need to examine principal strategy as a holistic leadership process. Studies of school literacy often focus on reading habits, library use, students' motivation, or classroom literacy activities. However, fewer studies explain how the principal connects vision, strategic planning, curriculum integration, teacher empowerment, school culture, parent involvement, and evaluation into one coherent improvement process (Mugwaze & Smith, 2024). The novelty of this article is its focus on principal literacy strategy in an integrated Islamic school context, where academic literacy, digital literacy, creative writing, and Islamic values are combined within school culture.

This article aims to describe and analyze the principal's strategies for improving students' literacy skills. More specifically, it explains the planning and implementation of the literacy strategy, identifies the challenges faced during implementation and the efforts used to overcome them, analyzes the principal's leadership role in strengthening literacy culture, and describes the impact of the strategy on students' literacy development. The article is expected to provide a practical model of literacy leadership for schools that seek to develop literacy as both an academic competence and a cultural habit (Alramamneh et al., 2023).



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Principal Literacy Strategy

B. Methods

This article is based on qualitative research using a case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to understand the principal's strategy in its natural school context. The study did not attempt to measure variables statistically, but to describe and interpret how literacy leadership was planned, implemented, monitored, and experienced by school stakeholders (Edge et al., 2022).

The case study design enabled the researcher to examine the literacy strategy in depth, including the institutional context, the interaction between school leaders and teachers, the participation of students and parents, and the documentation that supported the program.

The research site was SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang, an integrated Islamic junior high school located in Palembang, South Sumatra. The school was selected because it had implemented literacy programs as part of its school development agenda. The school context was also important because literacy was not only directed toward academic improvement, but also toward the development of Islamic character, creativity, and learning culture. This setting allowed the study to analyze how principal leadership connects curriculum, school programs, religious values, and student literacy practices (Massouti et al., 2024).

The research informants consisted of thirteen people: the principal, one school supervisor, one curriculum vice principal, five teachers, three students, and two parents. The principal was selected as the main informant because the study focused on leadership strategy. The supervisor and curriculum vice principal provided information about policy, program implementation, coordination, and evaluation. Teachers provided information about classroom literacy practices and learning challenges. Students described their experiences in reading, writing, discussion, and publication activities. Parents explained how school literacy programs influenced reading habits at home and what challenges appeared outside school (Esmaeeli, 2024).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews explored the principal's literacy vision, strategic planning, program implementation, challenges, solutions, leadership role, and program impact. Observation was used to identify literacy practices in classrooms and school spaces, including reading activities, use of literacy corners, student participation, teacher guidance, and the use of learning media. Documentation was used to examine vision and mission documents, literacy policies, school work plans, meeting notes, program reports, evaluation documents, reading facilities, and student literacy products (Brummernhenrich et al., 2021).

Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques. Statements from the principal were compared with information from teachers, students, parents, supervisor, and curriculum vice principal. Interview results were also compared with observations and documents. This process was important to avoid relying on a single source and to ensure that the findings reflected actual school practices. Member checking was also used to confirm whether the information obtained from informants was accurate and represented their experiences appropriately.

Data analysis followed a qualitative interactive process consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting information relevant to the four research questions. The data were then organized into thematic categories: planning and implementation, challenges and solutions, leadership role, and literacy impact. Data display was presented in narrative descriptions and summary tables. SWOT analysis was also used to map internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. Conclusions were drawn gradually by comparing findings across interviews, observations, and documents until consistent patterns were found (Bogner et al., 2021).

Table 1. Research Informants

Informant	Number	Research contribution
Principal	1	Explained vision, policy, planning, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of literacy strategy.
School supervisor	1	Provided external perspective on program direction, implementation quality, and leadership consistency.
Curriculum vice principal	1	Explained curriculum integration, program organization, and classroom implementation.
Teachers	5	Described classroom literacy practices, teaching challenges, student responses, and teacher development needs.
Students	3	Explained experiences in reading, writing, discussion, publications, and program participation.
Parents	2	Explained support and challenges related to home reading habits and gadget use.
Total	13	Triangulated perspectives from school leadership, implementers, participants, and families.

C. Results and Discussion

The results are presented in four parts. The first part describes the planning and implementation of the principal's literacy strategy. The second part explains the challenges found during implementation and the efforts used to overcome them. The third part analyzes the principal's leadership role in strengthening literacy culture. The fourth part describes the impact of the strategy on students' literacy skills and school literacy culture (Yapp et al., 2023).

Table 2. School Context and Literacy Support

Aspect	Finding
School identity	SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang is an integrated Islamic junior high school that combines academic learning, Islamic values, character formation, and student creativity.
Student data	The school had 499 students in 2025/2026: 187 in grade VII, 157 in grade VIII, and 155 in grade IX.
Literacy direction	The school mission includes reading, writing, discussion, creativity, technological adaptation, and character development.
Learning support	Classrooms have digital learning media; the school also has a library, science laboratory, IT laboratory, language laboratory, and learning resource room.
Main literacy program	PELITA includes literacy corners, reading habits, digital literacy, bulletins, wall magazines, book publication, and library appreciation.

SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang is an integrated Islamic junior high school that combines academic learning, Islamic values, character development, and student creativity. The school had 499 students in the 2025/2026 academic year, consisting of 187 students in grade VII, 157 students in grade VIII, and 155 students in grade IX. The school also had supporting facilities for learning and literacy, including classrooms equipped with digital learning media, a library, language laboratory, IT laboratory, science laboratory, and a learning resource room. These facilities became important assets in supporting the implementation of literacy programs (Ortega et al., 2020).

The planning of literacy strategy was developed from the school vision and mission. The vision emphasized the development of a quality school that contributes to Islamic civilization and produces high-quality graduates. The mission emphasized learning that shapes students as thinkers, worship-oriented individuals, and active learners, while also developing reading, writing, discussion, creativity, and adaptation to science and technology. Based on this direction, the principal formulated literacy as part of school identity and academic culture. Literacy was not placed as a temporary project, but as a long-term school development agenda (Heo & Seo, 2021).

The principal planned the literacy strategy through target mapping for short-term, medium-term, and long-term achievement. The strategy was then distributed to the curriculum division, student affairs division, and Islamic development division (Ali et al., 2021). This distribution was important because literacy was not limited to classroom teaching. It was connected with curriculum documents, student creativity programs, religious activities, library services, and school publications. The principal also used SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats before translating the strategy into the school strategic plan and program implementation.

The main literacy program was Penggiat Literasi Al-Furqon, known as PELITA. This program included several activities: literacy corners in classrooms, silent reading, library visit encouragement, digital literacy, bulletin publication, wall magazine activities, student and teacher writing, book anthology publication, and appreciation for active library users. Through PELITA, students were encouraged not only to read, but also to summarize, retell, discuss, write, and publish their ideas. The program therefore connected receptive literacy and productive literacy.

Implementation was carried out through collaborative coordination. The principal assigned responsibilities to the vice principal, coordinators, teachers, homeroom teachers, librarian, and literacy team. Homeroom teachers were involved in literacy corners, the librarian supported reading and library activities, and teachers integrated literacy into their subjects. The principal monitored implementation through meetings, administrative reports, direct observation, and communication groups. This

shows that implementation was supported by a leadership structure rather than individual initiative only (Bonawitz et al., 2020).

Observation results showed that teachers had integrated literacy into learning through fifteen-minute reading activities, text discussion, reading-based assignments, vocabulary explanation, question prompts, and writing tasks. Students were more enthusiastic when literacy activities were interactive and when they had freedom to choose reading materials according to interest. However, implementation was still uneven. Literacy practices were stronger in Indonesian language and related subjects, while integration in other subjects was still developing. Some students also required more intensive guidance because their reading and writing abilities differed (Chung et al., 2021). Documentation supported the interview and observation findings (Rees et al., 2023). School documents showed the existence of vision and mission statements related to literacy, written literacy policies, program documents, curriculum integration, school work plans, meeting notes, literacy activity reports, evaluation documents, and inventories of reading facilities. These documents indicated that the literacy strategy had administrative support and was not merely an informal activity.

Table 3. Summary of Literacy Strategy Implementation

Component	Implementation evidence	Meaning
Planning	Vision-mission alignment, SWOT analysis, RENSTRA, and target mapping for short, medium, and long terms.	Literacy was designed as a strategic school agenda.
Implementation	PELITA, silent reading, literacy corners, library programs, digital literacy, bulletins, wall magazines, and book publication.	Students were encouraged to read, discuss, write, and publish work.
Coordination	Tasks were distributed to curriculum, student affairs, Islamic development, teachers, homeroom teachers, librarian, and literacy team.	Program implementation involved the whole school structure.
Monitoring	Routine reports, meetings, direct checking, WhatsApp monitoring, and appreciation for active readers.	The principal-maintained control and motivation.
Evaluation need	Program outputs were monitored, but individual literacy progress was not yet fully data-based.	Future improvement requires stronger assessment tools.

The challenges faced by the school were multidimensional. From the managerial aspect, the main challenge was maintaining consistency across classes and ensuring that all teachers implemented literacy in a structured manner. Monitoring was already conducted, but it still focused more on program completion and administrative reports than on individual student literacy growth (Visscher, 2021). From the pedagogical aspect, teacher competence varied in integrating literacy strategies into learning. Some teachers needed further training in differentiated literacy instruction, text-based discussion, and creative writing guidance. From the student aspect, reading interest, writing ability, vocabulary mastery, and confidence differed from one student to another.

External challenges also appeared. Students were strongly influenced by gadgets, social media, and digital entertainment. Some students preferred short digital content to books. Home literacy support was not equally strong among families. Some parents provided reading materials and reminded children to read, while others had limited involvement due to time, habits, or lack of awareness. Reading resources were also a challenge because students were not allowed to freely use gadgets at school, so classroom literacy depended heavily on printed books and school-provided materials (Dabengwa et al., 2024). The principal responded to these challenges through several efforts. First, the school strengthened teacher competence through training, guidance, peer tutoring, and external resource persons. Teachers who had writing or IT skills were encouraged to become internal trainers for other teachers (Gorter & Arocena, 2020). Second, teachers used more varied methods, such as guided reading, group discussion, video-based learning followed by writing tasks, and individual mentoring for students who had difficulties. Third, the school provided motivation and rewards, including appreciation for active library users and publication opportunities for student work. Fourth, the school communicated with parents to support reading habits at home and control gadget use.

Table 4. Challenges and Strategic Responses

Challenge	Main indication	Strategic response
Teacher competence variation	Teachers differed in readiness to integrate literacy into various subjects.	Training, peer tutoring, internal sharing, and external mentoring.
Student interest variation	Some students were active, while others were passive or struggled with reading and writing.	Guided reading, individual assistance, creative writing tasks, and student choice in reading materials.
Limited data-based evaluation	Monitoring focused more on activities and outputs than individual progress.	Need to develop portfolios, reading logs, writing rubrics, and comprehension records.
Resource and time constraints	Printed reading materials and learning time were limited.	Strengthening literacy corners, library collections, and contextual learning methods.
Gadget and home environment influence	Some students preferred social media and had uneven reading support at home.	Parent communication, home reading support, and controlled digital literacy activities.

The principal's leadership role was dominant in strengthening literacy culture. The principal acted as a policy maker by placing literacy in the school vision, mission, strategic plan, and program structure. The principal also acted as a manager by dividing tasks across school units and coordinating routine monitoring. As an instructional leader, the principal encouraged teachers to integrate literacy into lesson planning and classroom activities. As a motivator, the principal gave encouragement, appreciation, and public recognition to teachers and students. As a cultural leader, the principal strengthened literacy as a habit supported by Islamic values, creativity, and collective participation (Walid et al., 2025).

The impact of the strategy was visible in students' academic and cultural development. The school literacy score increased from 73.33 percent in 2024 to 93.65 percent in 2025. Students became more active in reading, class discussion, writing, and publication activities. They produced poems, short stories, comics, book reviews, and bulletin materials. Teachers reported that students were more confident in expressing ideas orally and in writing. Parents also observed that some children became more interested in reading at home and more motivated because of school rewards and publication opportunities (van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2023).

The results indicate that the principal's strategy did not only increase literacy achievement, but also encouraged the growth of a literacy culture. Students were not treated only as readers, but also as writers and creators. Literacy became connected to creativity, classroom interaction, digital adaptation, Islamic values, and school identity. Nevertheless, the program still requires stronger data-based evaluation, wider parental involvement, and more consistent implementation across subjects and classes.

Table 5. Impact of the Principal Literacy Strategy

Impact area	Evidence from findings	Interpretation
Literacy achievement	The school literacy score increased from 73.33% in 2024 to 93.65% in 2025.	The strategy contributed to measurable improvement at the school level.
Student participation	Students participated in reading, discussion, writing, comics, poems, short stories, reviews, and bulletin publication.	Students became active literacy subjects, not only program recipients.
Classroom learning	Teachers used reading, text discussion, vocabulary explanation, video-to-writing tasks, and summaries.	Literacy became connected to instructional practice.
Creativity and confidence	Students produced published works and became more confident in expressing ideas.	Literacy supported communication and creative expression.
School culture	Literacy was linked with Islamic values, character formation, and school identity.	The strategy strengthened both academic and cultural dimensions.

Discussion

The findings show that literacy improvement at SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang was strongly influenced by the principal's ability to connect vision with implementation. A school vision becomes meaningful only when it is translated into programs, structures, roles, and daily habits. In this case, the principal did not merely state that literacy was important. The principal placed literacy in the school strategic plan, connected it with curriculum, assigned responsibilities to school divisions, organized PELITA, and monitored program implementation. This indicates that effective literacy leadership requires alignment between school ideals and practical school management.

The first important discussion point is the strategic nature of planning (Schiff, 2022). The principal used SWOT-based mapping to understand school strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The strengths included committed leadership, competent teachers, available facilities, Islamic school identity, and student creativity. Weaknesses included uneven teacher competence, limited data-based evaluation, and varying student interest. Opportunities included policy support, parent involvement, publication activities, and technology (Johnson et al., 2023). Threats included gadget distraction, weak reading habits at home, and inconsistent external support. Through this mapping, the school was able to develop a literacy strategy that was contextual rather than generic.

The second point is that PELITA functioned as a literacy ecosystem. Its activities were not limited to a single reading program. Literacy corners, silent reading, library use, digital literacy, wall magazines, bulletin publication, book writing, and appreciation systems created multiple entry points for student participation. Students with different interests could participate through reading, writing, drawing comics, reviewing books, or contributing to bulletins. This variety is important because students do not develop literacy in one uniform way. Some students may be motivated by creative writing, others by visual storytelling, and others by discussion or digital media. A broad literacy program can therefore accommodate different student interests and talents (Goyibova et al., 2025).

The third point concerns instructional leadership. Literacy was strengthened because the principal encouraged teachers to integrate literacy into teaching. This is essential because literacy cannot grow only through library activities. It must be embedded in classroom learning across subjects. Reading before learning, discussing texts, explaining vocabulary, writing summaries, and connecting texts with subject matter are practical forms of content-based literacy. However, the findings also show that this integration was not yet fully equal across subjects. This means that the next stage of improvement should focus on helping every teacher design subject-based literacy tasks that fit the characteristics of their discipline (Kosmas et al., 2025).

The principal also demonstrated transformational leadership by changing school habits and motivating school members. Transformational leadership is reflected in the effort to inspire teachers and students, create shared commitment, and build a culture that goes beyond administrative compliance. The principal motivated teachers through training, peer learning, and facilitation (Kim & Lee, 2020). Students were motivated through recognition, publication opportunities, and activities that allowed them to display work publicly. This form of leadership is important because literacy is not only a technical skill, but also a habit, identity, and cultural practice.

The involvement of parents is another critical element. The findings show that parents supported the program in different ways, such as reminding children to read and providing reading materials at home. However, parental involvement was not yet

fully consistent. This condition is common in school literacy programs because the home environment strongly influences reading habits. When students return home to environments dominated by gadgets, social media, or limited reading support, school literacy habits may weaken. Therefore, the principal's strategy should continue to include parent communication, reading assignments that require home support, and family literacy campaigns. The stronger the connection between school and home, the stronger the sustainability of literacy culture (Peters et al., 2020).

The challenge of gadgets should not only be viewed as a problem but also as a strategic opportunity. Students are attracted to digital media because it is fast, visual, interactive, and close to their daily life. The school's restriction on gadget use may be necessary for discipline, but the literacy program can still develop controlled digital literacy through the IT laboratory, curated digital reading materials, digital storytelling, and publication platforms managed by teachers. In this way, technology can be used to support reading and writing instead of replacing them. Digital literacy must be guided so that students learn to select information, understand content, and communicate ideas responsibly (Marín & Castañeda, 2023).

The findings also show that evaluation remains an important area for strengthening. The school already monitored activities through reports, meetings, program targets, and publication outputs. However, monitoring was still more focused on whether programs were implemented than on how each student's literacy skill developed over time. A more comprehensive data-based evaluation system is needed. The school could develop literacy portfolios, reading logs, writing rubrics, comprehension assessments, and student progress records. These tools would help teachers and leaders identify students who need support, compare progress across classes, and evaluate which literacy activities are most effective (Javaid et al., 2023).

The improvement of the literacy score from 73.33 percent to 93.65 percent is a significant indicator of program impact. However, this improvement should be interpreted carefully. A score increase shows progress at the institutional level, but the school still needs more detailed evidence about individual student growth, reading comprehension levels, writing quality, and consistency of reading habits. Combining institutional data with classroom-based evidence would make future evaluation stronger (Franco et al., 2024). This would also help the principal make more accurate decisions about training, reading materials, and program priorities.

The cultural dimension of the program is one of the strongest findings. In SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang, literacy was connected to Islamic values and character formation. This connection is important because students were encouraged not only to read and write, but also to reflect on values, ethics, and identity. Literacy therefore became a bridge between intellectual development and moral development. This is especially relevant for integrated Islamic schools, where academic achievement and spiritual values are expected to support each other. The strategy shows that literacy can be

developed as a value-based school culture rather than as a purely academic target (Mashami et al., 2025).

From a practical perspective, the leadership model found in this study can be summarized as integrated literacy leadership. The model consists of five connected components: strategic planning, program implementation, teacher empowerment, collaborative monitoring, and cultural reinforcement. Strategic planning provides direction. Program implementation provides activities. Teacher empowerment improves classroom practice. Collaborative monitoring keeps the program on track. Cultural reinforcement makes literacy a habit. These components should not be separated because a weakness in one component can reduce the impact of the others (Lucas, 2023).

The findings also suggest that leadership for literacy must be adaptive. The principal faced changing conditions: different student interests, teacher readiness, limited time, reading material needs, and digital distractions. The response was not a single solution, but a combination of training, motivation, facility development, peer tutoring, method variation, and parent cooperation. This adaptive response is important because school literacy programs are dynamic. They require continuous adjustment according to student needs, teacher capacity, and environmental changes (Mahmood et al., 2024).

Overall, the study confirms that principal strategy plays a central role in improving literacy skills. Literacy achievement does not grow automatically from the availability of books or from a reading slogan (Kucirkova & Grøver, 2024). It grows when the principal builds a system that connects policy, people, programs, facilities, evaluation, and culture. SMP IT Al-Furqon Palembang provides an example of how a school can move from literacy as an activity toward literacy as an institutional culture. The next challenge is to deepen the quality of evaluation, strengthen implementation across all subjects, and expand family participation so that literacy improvement becomes more inclusive and sustainable.

D. Conclusions

This study concludes that the principal's strategy for improving students' literacy skills was implemented through an integrated leadership process that connected planning, implementation, problem solving, cultural strengthening, and evaluation. The planning stage was built on the school vision, strategic mapping, and SWOT-based needs analysis. Literacy was not positioned as an additional activity, but as a core school agenda that was translated into curriculum practices, student programs, Islamic values, and daily learning routines. In implementation, the principal organized the PELITA program through literacy corners, reading habits, digital literacy, bulletin publication, wall magazines, book production, and appreciation for active library users. These activities encouraged students to read, summarize, discuss,

write, and publish their ideas in various forms. The study also found that the principal acted as an instructional and transformational leader. This role was visible in the way the principal guided teachers, coordinated literacy teams, monitored program progress, involved parents, and motivated students through rewards and public recognition. Several obstacles still appeared, including differences in teacher competence, uneven student reading interest, limited reading resources, time constraints, weak data-based evaluation, and the influence of gadgets and home reading habits. These obstacles were addressed through teacher training, peer tutoring, external mentoring, varied learning methods, stronger coordination, and cooperation with parents. The impact of the strategy was reflected in academic and cultural improvement. Students became more active in reading, discussion, writing, and creative publication. Literacy achievement increased from 73.33% in 2024 to 93.65% in 2025. The strategy also strengthened the school's Islamic literacy culture by connecting reading and writing activities with character formation, reflective thinking, and moral values. Therefore, the principal's literacy strategy can be understood as a sustainable school improvement model that combines policy, instructional leadership, collaboration, facilities, and cultural habituation to strengthen students' literacy skills. It remains relevant for similar integrated Islamic schools.

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