BASIC LITERACY AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE LEARNING AT THE MARSUDI PUTRA SOCIAL PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION UNIT (UPT) SURABAYA

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Abstract: *The low level of basic literacy skills among vulnerable groups, particularly children in social rehabilitation institutions, remains a social problem closely related to unequal access to education and structural family conditions. Children in the Marsudi Putra Social Protection and Rehabilitation Technical Implementation Unit (UPT PRSMP) Surabaya generally come from backgrounds of school dropouts, troubled families, and economic limitations, which impact low literacy skills and general knowledge. This study aims to analyze the implementation of basic literacy and general knowledge learning through non-formal education and examine its role as a social resocialization process for children in foster care from a sociological perspective. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design implemented over four months. Data were obtained through participatory observation, direct mentoring, reflection notes, and activity documentation. The results show that non-formal literacy learning not only improves basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills but also contributes to increased self-confidence, learning motivation, and the quality of social interactions of children in foster care. Despite facing obstacles such as differences in learning abilities and time constraints, institutional support and the flexibility of non-formal education enable the literacy program to run effectively. Sociologically, non-formal literacy learning functions as a form of social intervention that supports the rehabilitation and social reintegration of foster children.*
Keywords: basic literacy, non-formal education, social resocialization, foster children, sociology of education

INTRODUCTION

Basic literacy is one of the important indicators in social development and the quality of human resources, because the ability to read, write, and understand information functions not only as an academic skill but also as social capital that

enables individuals to participate actively in community life. From a sociological perspective, literacy is closely related to an individual's ability to access social resources, build relationships, and understand the norms and values that apply in their social environment. However, social reality shows that access to literacy is not evenly distributed among all groups in society. Structural inequality in education remains a problem experienced by vulnerable groups, one of which is foster children in social rehabilitation institutions, who generally come from backgrounds of poverty, family dysfunction, experiences of violence, and a history of dropping out of school. This condition has a direct impact on low basic literacy skills and a lack of general knowledge, thereby increasing the risk of social marginalization and the reproduction of social problems in the future (Laila & Salahudin, 2022). In this context, the Marsudi Putra Social Protection and Rehabilitation UPT (PRSMP) Surabaya serves as a social institution that handles children with various social problems and seeks to restore their social functioning through rehabilitation programs. Non-formal education is one of the strategies developed because it is flexible, contextual, and adaptive to learners' social conditions, unlike formal education, which is often unable to reach the specific needs of vulnerable groups. A number of studies show that non-formal education plays a significant role in improving the literacy and life skills of marginalized communities because of its participatory approach and its responsiveness to learners' social realities (Ismail et al., 2021; Wahdatan Nisa et al., 2023; Aulia & Hadiapurwa, 2023). Therefore, the low literacy of foster children cannot be understood as merely an individual failure but as the result of a social process influenced by an unequal social structure, so that intervention through literacy-based non-formal education becomes important as a sociological effort to reduce this inequality.

Starting from this context, basic literacy and general knowledge learning at UPT PRSMP Surabaya is viewed not only as an effort to improve cognitive ability but also as part of the social resocialization process of foster children. Literacy learning in non-formal education enables foster children to rebuild positive social relationships, increase their self-confidence, and see learning as a safe and meaningful experience. The focus of this study is directed at understanding the foster children's basic literacy conditions, the process of implementing literacy and general knowledge learning through non-formal education, and the dynamics of the role of intern students in supporting literacy mentoring in a social rehabilitation institution. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and a case study, this study seeks to describe in depth how non-formal literacy learning takes place in everyday practice, how the foster children respond to the learning process, and how changes in literacy ability intertwine with changes in the foster children's attitudes, social interaction, and self-confidence. Through this analysis, this article seeks not only to explain the effectiveness of non-formal literacy learning but also to place the

practice within the framework of the sociology of education and the sociology of social problems, so that literacy learning is understood as a continuous and contextual social process in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of foster children.

The novelty of this study lies in how it positions basic literacy and general knowledge learning as a social resocialization process in the context of a social rehabilitation institution, not merely as a program for improving academic ability. Unlike previous studies, which generally emphasize literacy achievement quantitatively or the evaluation of learning outcomes, this study highlights the social, interactional, and rehabilitative dimensions of non-formal education for foster children. The use of a research internship experience as a space for producing sociological knowledge also presents methodological novelty, in which students act not only as program implementers but as social actors directly involved in interaction and literacy mentoring. In its analysis, this study draws on the perspective of the sociology of education to understand the role of non-formal education as an alternative social institution, symbolic interactionism theory to read the process by which foster children form the meaning of learning and self-identity through everyday interaction, and structural functionalism theory to see the function of literacy education in maintaining social functioning and the stability of society. Thus, this study is expected to make an academic contribution to enriching the study of the sociology of education and applied sociology, while also providing practical benefits for social rehabilitation institutions, students, and education practitioners in designing non-formal literacy programs that are more contextual, humane, and sustainable for vulnerable groups.

METHOD

Research Method This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. The research was carried out over four months (September–December 2025) at the Marsudi Putra Social Protection and Rehabilitation UPT (PRSMP) Surabaya. The research subjects consisted of 8 foster children who took part in the basic literacy and general knowledge learning program. This article focuses an in-depth analysis on only a few subjects as representative case studies to describe the dynamics of the non-formal literacy learning process. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, direct mentoring, daily reflection notes, and documentation of learning activities. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of techniques and sources, namely by comparing the results of observation, mentoring reflections, and field documentation. The researcher's position as an intern student and, at the same time, a literacy mentor allowed direct

involvement in the learning process while also requiring reflexivity in interpreting the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of basic literacy and general knowledge learning at UPT PRSMP Surabaya was carried out through a flexible and contextual non-formal education approach. Learning activities were designed to adjust to the foster children's social, psychological, and academic conditions. The material provided included basic reading and writing skills, recognition of letters and numbers, and simple general knowledge related to everyday life. The learning process was carried out through direct mentoring by intern students using a learning-by-practice method, light discussion, and gradual repetition of the material. This approach was chosen because some of the foster children have had unpleasant learning experiences in the past and therefore need a comfortable, non-pressuring learning atmosphere. This is in line with the findings of Wahdatan Nisa et al. (2023), who stated that participatory non-formal education can increase learners' involvement and interest in learning. In practice, literacy learning does not focus only on the cognitive aspect but also pays attention to the foster children's affective and social aspects. The students acted as facilitators and mentors who built interpersonal relationships with the foster children. The interaction built during the learning process became an important factor in creating a conducive learning atmosphere and supporting the children's literacy development.

Basic Literacy Progress of Foster Children

Table 1 Learning Progress

NO.	ID	INITIAL LEVEL	DEVELOPMENT AFTER MENTORING	REMARKS
1.	R	Does not yet know letters, less fluent in subtracting and multiplying	Able to read simply, able to do simple subtraction and multiplication	Short memory span for recognizing certain difficult letters, and also easily influenced by the surroundings when studying.
2.	I	Reads haltingly	Fluency improved	Still has difficulty with certain letters
3.	R	Already has fairly good general knowledge	Increasingly improving in knowledge and learning interest	Development is already very good, but it must still be improved.

The results of the activity show positive changes in the foster children after taking part in non-formal literacy learning. These changes are seen in improved basic reading and writing skills, although the level of improvement differs for each child. Children who previously did not know the letters fully began to be able to read simple words, while children who already had basic skills showed improvement in reading fluency. In addition to improved academic ability, literacy learning also had an impact on the foster children's psychosocial aspects. The children showed increased self-confidence and courage to take part in learning activities. The shyness and fear of making mistakes that had previously appeared gradually decreased along with the supportive learning approach. This finding is in line with the study by Aulia and Hadiapurwa (2023), which states that literacy-based non-formal education can increase children's self-confidence and learning motivation. From a sociological perspective, these changes show that literacy functions as a means of resocialization for foster children. Through an interactive learning process, the foster children build new meanings about themselves as individuals who are able to learn and grow. This reinforces the symbolic interactionism view that social meaning is formed through continuous interaction (Blumer, in the study of the sociology of education).

Although it has positive effects, the implementation of non-formal literacy learning at UPT PRSMP Surabaya is not free from various obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the differences in the foster children's literacy abilities and memory. Some children have difficulty remembering letters, distinguishing certain letters, and maintaining concentration for a long time. Other obstacles relate to the foster children's psychological conditions, such as shyness, low self-esteem, and traumatic experiences that affect learning motivation. Children who feel left behind compared with their peers tend to be reluctant to be active in learning. This condition shows that literacy problems are not only academic but also related to complex psychosocial factors. In addition, the limited time and activity schedule of the institution is also a challenge in implementing the literacy program. The busy agenda of rehabilitation and other coaching activities limits the time for literacy learning. This finding is in line with the study by Ismail et al. (2021), which states that limited time and resources are common challenges in non-formal education.

Alongside the obstacles, there are various supporting factors that contribute to the success of non-formal literacy learning. Support from the institution, the caregivers, and the educators at UPT PRSMP Surabaya is an important factor in the smooth running of the program. The relatively conducive institutional environment allows learning activities to take place in an orderly and safe manner. Collaboration between the intern students and the caregivers is also a strength in implementing

the program. The students received direction and guidance in understanding the foster children's characters, while the caregivers were helped by the support of mentoring staff in literacy activities. The study by Laila and Salahudin (2022) affirms that collaboration among various parties is the key to the success of empowerment-based non-formal education programs. The flexibility of learning methods is also an important supporting factor. The students could adjust the methods and materials according to the foster children's needs and abilities, so that the learning process became more effective and inclusive.

From the standpoint of the sociology of education, non-formal literacy learning at UPT PRSMP Surabaya functions as a social mechanism for reducing educational inequality. Non-formal education becomes an alternative space for foster children to obtain the right to education that was previously hindered by structural conditions. Within the framework of symbolic interactionism, the interaction between the students and the foster children during the learning process forms new meanings about learning and education. The foster children no longer see learning as a frightening activity but as a process that can be undertaken gradually and meaningfully. This supportive interaction contributes to the formation of a more positive self-identity. Meanwhile, from the perspective of structural functionalism, non-formal literacy education plays a role in supporting social stability by preparing foster children to be able to function again in society. Basic literacy and general knowledge become an important provision in the process of social reintegration and the prevention of recurring social problems.

The implementation of basic literacy and general knowledge learning at UPT PRSMP Surabaya was carried out through a flexible and contextual non-formal education approach. The program was attended by eight foster children with diverse educational backgrounds and literacy abilities. The learning material included recognition of letters and numbers, basic reading and writing, simple arithmetic, and general knowledge related to everyday life. The learning process was carried out through direct mentoring using practice methods, gradual repetition, and dialogical interaction. The results of the study show an improvement in basic literacy skills in most of the foster children. Table 1 presents a summary of the foster children's literacy development after taking part in the mentoring program. Although the level of development differs, in general the foster children showed progress in reading and understanding written instructions. This finding shows that non-formal education has potential as an alternative for fulfilling the right to education for children with a history of dropping out of school.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, basic literacy and general knowledge learning through non-

formal education at UPT PRSMP Surabaya contributes positively to improving foster children's literacy skills and social development by strengthening their reading and writing abilities, self-confidence, learning motivation, and social interactions. Although the program faces challenges related to differences in learning abilities and limited instructional time, institutional support and the flexibility of non-formal education enable its continued implementation. From a sociological perspective, non-formal literacy education represents a relevant form of social intervention to address educational inequality and support the social rehabilitation of foster children. Therefore, literacy programs should be strengthened and implemented sustainably within social rehabilitation institutions, collaboration between universities and social institutions should be expanded to develop more effective literacy-based educational initiatives, and further research should examine the long-term impact of non-formal education on foster children's social reintegration.

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