

Systematic Review Literature: The Issue of Illiteracy among Primary School Students

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Abstract

Reading skills are a very important basis of life in today's globalization era phenomenon. This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR). Therefore this study has collected as many as ten highlights of the literature review that can answer the theme set in the study. There are three themes highlighted in this study which are illiteracy factors among primary school students, the effects of illiteracy among primary school students and ways to overcome the issue of illiteracy among primary school students. The selection of articles for writing this SLR is from 2014 to 2024, which is a period of ten years. There are eight studies that discuss the factors that cause illiteracy among students, four studies discuss the effects of illiteracy and nine studies discuss how to overcome the issue of illiteracy at the primary school level. There are some common findings for each study either in terms of factors, effects and ways to overcome the issue of illiteracy.

Keywords: Reading Skills, linus, Literacy, Illiteracy, Literacy, Rehabilitation, Primary School, Malay Language.

Introduction

The issue of illiteracy is not a foreign issue in the world of education in Malaysia. This issue seems to have no end even though this country is one of the rapidly developing countries. The problem of illiteracy is the failure of one of the elements in literacy skills. Literacy skills are reading and writing skills that children need to master to be used during the learning process and daily communication. Lonigan (2006), defines literacy skills as the ability and knowledge that is important in achieving success in reading and writing. Reading skills include the process of recognizing and understanding letters, words, phrases, sentences and texts as a whole. Haji Azman (2021), in the Basic Malay Literacy Module thinks that literacy and numeracy skills are important in helping students improve learning achievement at the next level.

Illiterate is a group of individuals who have not mastered the 3M aspects of reading, counting and writing. According to the Fourth Edition Hall Dictionary (2023), illiterate means an individual who does not know how to read and write. Children with less reading experience have a higher frequency of belonging to the illiterate group (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).

Abdul Rasid Jaiman (2011), in his study stated that the main problem that leads to the problem of illiteracy among students is the result of their incompetence to recognize capital letters and small letters while reading as well as not pronouncing or sounding syllable sounds accurately. As a result, these students will try to focus on pronouncing words without being able to understand the meaning of the material that has been read. This situation will result in students losing enjoyment in the reading process because reading comprehension depends on language knowledge, cognitive style and meaningful reading experience among students.

Kamalawati Dolhan et al (2019), also stated that the ability to recognize letters among students requires a variety of skills. This is because the cognitive skills of students are not the same as the cognitive skills of adults. Pupils are more likely to use an interesting and creative approach to help them recognize letters and further strengthen their literacy skills in the future. According to the researcher, one of the ways that teachers can use to boost students' reading skills is by using visual images.

Jayaganes Balanadam and Khairul Azhar Jamaluddin (2021), in their study stated that reading skills is a complex human behavior. Reading skills are also a human way to interact with printed materials. A child's ability to read at an early stage can be categorized as early reading ability. Early stage reading usually shows uneven reading and stuttering. Nevertheless, the characteristics shown by the children in question are a normal phenomenon in the process of students recognizing letters or mastering reading skills.

Abdul Rasid Jamian (2011), in his study stated that a student who does not master reading skills causes them to be unable to master oral skills. Oral skills refer to the student's ability to communicate two-way with other individuals. Pupils who are still illiterate are more likely to show no interest in following PdP activities held by teachers at school. This is because most PdP activities held by teachers really require students to be good at reading in order to master the content of the lessons that have been taught. Therefore, the findings of the study found that students who are not good at reading experience difficulty in classifying the content found in Malay texts in particular.

Rosyati Manaf and Kamariah Abu Bakar (2022), in their study stated that one of the problems that primary school students often face when in the process of improving reading skills is not being able to recognize letters correctly. This is because there are students who are often confused and find it difficult to remember lowercase and uppercase letters because there are letters that are almost the same shape whether they are lowercase or uppercase. This situation is of great concern to teachers in primary schools especially because in addition to chasing time to finish the subject syllabus, teachers also have to work hard to help their students master reading skills. Students who are not good at reading also certainly do not show satisfactory academic performance.

Next, Nurhidayah Mat Husin and Wan Muna Ruzanna Wan Mohammad (2023) in their study have stated that Year One students have problems mastering reading and writing skills. This problem stems from the student's inability to sound the syllables correctly. Students who are not proficient in reading when they are in Year One means that they have not yet mastered reading literacy skills when studying at the preschool level. Based on the findings in this study,

it can be concluded that students who can spell syllables well read faster than students who have difficulty remembering and pronouncing syllable sounds accurately.

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that uses a systematic literature review method. This method will systematically analyze the results of previous studies to identify issues related to illiteracy among primary school students in Malaysia. The literature sources used in this study are also limited from 2014 to 2024, which is within the most recent 10-year period only. This study includes background, problems, methods and research findings. Each selected literature study will also be systematically organized according to the aspects that have been set to facilitate the discussion in this study.

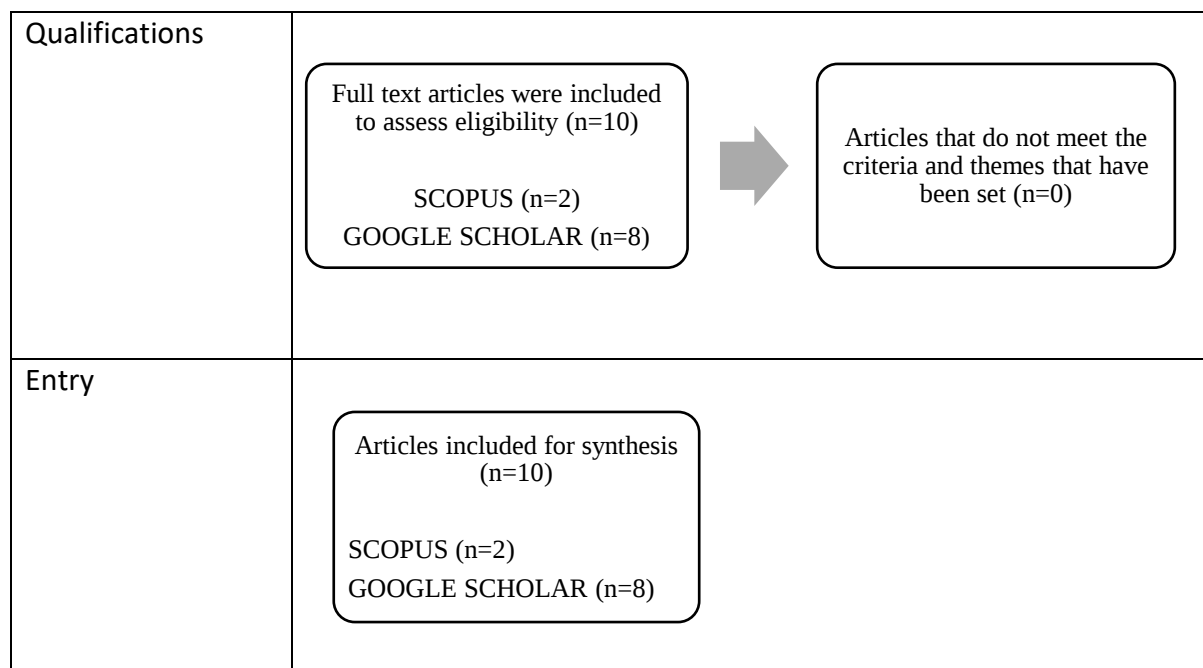
In addition, this study also applied a systematic search by using keywords such as the procedure in organizing a systematic literature review (SLR) applied by past researchers. This study uses several key words in searching and analyzing the findings of previous studies such as illiteracy, literacy, reading skills, children, primary school, Special Rehabilitation, Preschool and Early Childhood Education. The literature search used to complete this study was through Google Scholar, Scopus and Researchgate. Therefore, there are 10 literature studies that will be used in writing this study.

Research Article Selection Process

Table 1

Systematic research process

STAGES	STEPS
Identification	Publication articles were identified through the Scopus and Google Scholar databases between 2014 and 2024. ➔ Number of articles for identification (n=75) SCOPUS (n=35) GOOGLE SCHOLAR (n=40)
Screening	Number of articles for screening (n=35) SCOPUS (n=9) GOOGLE SCHOLAR (n=26) ➔ Excluded articles that are articles that are incomplete and do not meet the set theme (n=25)



Research Findings

There are 10 research articles that successfully answer the questions and objectives in this study, which are related to the issue of illiteracy that occurs among students in primary schools. The findings of the study are presented in the form of a table (Table 1) so that it is easier to understand and refer to by the reader.

Table 2

Highlights of a Systematic Literature Review of the Issue of Illiteracy Among Children

NO	RESEARCH TOPIC	RESEARCH PROBLEMS	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS
1	Issues and Challenges in Reading Skills Among Primary School Students in Malaysia	Lack of students' ability to master basic skills in Malay.	i) Study Design: Qualitative ii) Research Instrument: Interview iii) Study Sample: Teachers, Pupils and Parents of government schools	There are six causes of reading problems among students, namely individual factors, psychology, teacher's teaching methods, teaching time and environmental factors.
2	Dropout Factors of Pupils of the Special Rehabilitation	i) The Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) found that there are still student	i) Study Design: Survey - Qualitative ii) Research Instrument :	There are several issues in remedial education such as the use of

	Program of Primary Schools in Malaysia	dropouts in the mastery of Malay literacy. ii) Many children do not master the 3M (reading, writing, counting) though after three years at school.	Systematic literature review (SLR) iii) Study Sample : None	Teaching Aids (TAB), cognitive styles and language learning problems.
3	Literacy Module: Parental Involvement To Improve Children's Literacy Achievement	Reading is not a family culture in Malaysia.	i) Study Design: Quantitative ii) Research instrument: Questionnaire iii) Study sample: 60 children from Permata Yayasan Keluarga Terengganu nursery school (YPKT)	The use of early literacy modules cannot improve the overall achievement of early literacy.
4	Implementation of the Primary School Malay Language Recovery Program and its Effects in Overcoming the Problem of Illiteracy	Year 1 students have not yet mastered reading and writing skills.	i) Study Design: Qualitative-Case Study ii) Research Instruments: Observation, Audio Recording, Semi-Structured Interview, Document Analysis iii) Study Sample: Rehabilitation Teachers at 4 National Schools (SK)	The regular implementation of the Primary School Malay Language Recovery Program is believed to help students master the literacy skills of reading and writing.
5	Mastery of Malay Reading Skills of Non-native Speakers in Bintulu, Sarawak	There are still problems among non-native speakers who do not master the reading skills of the Malay language in Sarawak.	i) Study Design: Qualitative – Case Study ii) Research Instruments: Interviews, Document Analysis and Observation iii) Study sample: 10 students who are not native speakers in Bintulu, Sarawak	Students who are not native speakers have weaknesses in basic reading such as wrongly hiding letters that seem to have the same shape, sounding out certain letters and mistakenly sounding out the names of letters

				that seem to be the same.
6	Facing Literacy Challenges in Malay Language Learning Among Indigenous Pupils in Jakun Lenga, Johor: A Preliminary Survey	The main problem faced in learning Malay literacy is the issue of student motivation and the attitude of the parents of the Orang Asli community in motivating their children to continue learning.	Study Design: Qualitative Research Instruments: Interviews, Observations and Document Analysis Study Sample: 23 Orang Asli students of Jakun descent from Year 1 to Year 6	There are 12 main factors that are a challenge for Orang Asli students, namely motivation, attendance, placement of students, education of parents, peers, interest, attitude, environment, preschool education, eating patterns and remedial classes.
7	The Effectiveness of the Learning Through Play Approach in Syllable Stemming Skills	There are students who do not master the skills of stemming syllables well in learning the basics of reading literacy after a certain period of learning.	i) Study Design: Quantitative ii) Study Instrument : Oral Test Set (Pre-Test and Post-Test) iii) Study sample: 60 Year Three students at a primary school in Kuching district, Sarawak.	PBMB can improve the syllable stemming skills of students in the treatment group compared to the conventional approach revealed to students in the control group.
8	Strategies for Reading Skills Among Excellent Students and Weak Students in SJK(T) Batu Caves, Selangor	The students' ability to master the Malay language is still at a low level.	i) Study Design: Mix Method - Overview. ii) Research Instruments: Questionnaires (Quantitative) and Interviews, Analysis of Strategy Forms and Observations (Qualitative). iii) Study sample: 80 SJK(T) Batu Caves students	i) Reading skills strategies in class are often used by excellent students in improving Malay reading skills. ii) Weak students are less interested in reading Malay material.

9	Improving the Reading Skills and Motivation of Non-Native Speakers in Malay Through the Express-I Method	Students who are not native speakers experience difficulty in reading Malay words with smooth and clear pronunciation.	i) Study Design: Qualitative – Action Research ii) Research instruments: pre-test, post-test, analysis of reading training documents, observation and interview iii) Study sample: 2 Year Four students who are not native Malay speakers	i) The Express-I method can help students in reading syllables because it simplifies the process of pronouncing syllables. ii) Mastery of reading skills for two respondents improved after exposure to the Ekspress-I method.
10	Application of Early Literacy Skills Components in Reading and Writing Skills of Preschool Children Aged 5 and 6 Years	Reading is a skill that is very difficult for preschool children to master.	i) Design: Concept Paper ii) Study Instrument : Not specified iii) Study Sample : Not specified	The success and success of children in mastering reading and writing skills depends on careful planning by preschool teachers.

Discussion

Based on the 10 literature review articles that have been selected, there are three important themes or aspects that will be focused on in this study. Among them are the factors of illiteracy, the effects of illiteracy and how to overcome the issue of illiteracy. The themes of each selected article will be summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Classification of Articles by Theme

NO	ARTICLE	THE ILLITERACY FACTOR	THE EFFECT OF ILLITERACY	HOW TO OVERCOME ILLITERACY ISSUES
1	Jayaganes Balanadam, Khairul Azhar Jamaluddin (2021)	/	/	X
2	Nur Faizahton Saidin dan Nur Azimah Mohd Bukhari (2023)	/	X	/
3	Zainiah Mohamed Isa (2022)	/	X	/
4	Jiani binti Jaman (2015)	/	X	/
5	Sylvesther Lau Yueh Wei, Alizah Lambri & Rosliah Kiting (2020)	/	X	/
6	Nurul Jamilah Rosly dan Nor Zainiyah Zarita Mokhtar (2021)	/	X	/
7	Noor Azlinna Yasir dan Jamaludin Badusah (2018)	X	/	/
8	Usha Nagasundram dan Vijayaletchumy Subramaniam (2019)	/	X	/
9	Lee Ngik Ting dan Faridah Mydin Kutty (2022)	/	/	/
10	Mohammad Nurulanuar Hussin, Zainiah Mohamed Isa dan Jamilah Mohd Basir (2022)	X	X	/

Based on the classification of articles according to themes and aspects that have been set, most articles meet at least one aspect that has been set, making the research article in question eligible to be used in the writing of this study. A total of eight articles used in this study have the factors of the issue of illiteracy and three articles have discussed the effects of illiteracy among children while only one article does not clearly state how to deal with the issue of illiteracy among children.

Theme 1 : Factors in the Problem of Illiteracy among Primary School Students

The practice of reading is a routine practice done by humans in obtaining information and interacting. Nevertheless, the issue of illiteracy in Malaysia is still at a worrying level. According to the researcher, one of the factors that contribute to the issue of illiteracy is the ineffectiveness of teaching and learning activities involving the subject of the Malay language implemented at the national school level. In addition, non-Malay students are also less fond of communicating using the Malay language, causing their pronunciation of the Malay language to be less clear, thus making it difficult for them to master reading skills well.

The issue of illiteracy among primary school students recently is caused by the Covid-19 epidemic that began to hit the country in 2019. This is caused by the government's order to stop the operation of schools in the period 2020-2021 where students and teachers only hold sessions online learning or better known as PdPr. This study also thinks that students who are not good at reading mostly have problems in spelling and stemming syllables, especially for the group of Special Rehabilitation students.

The issue of illiteracy that occurs among children in this country is caused by the practice of families at home who are not interested in reading. This situation has resulted in children preferring to fill their free time by doing other activities that are less beneficial such as playing mobile phones or watching television and excessive time without parental control. The attitude of parents who are too dependent and expect the teachers at school to guide their children to be literate causes students to be slower in the process of reading literacy skills.

The use of teaching aids (BBM) by rehabilitation teachers during teaching and learning sessions has caused literacy skills to be difficult to convey to students. BBM, which is not interesting and boring, cannot attract the interest of the students to participate in the learning session, causing the students to lose focus. This situation is due to the comprehension ability of remedial class students is lower compared to other mainstream students. In fact, there are Special Rehabilitation Teachers who still have the problem of lack of reference resources to guide students who are not good at reading at school.

The issue of illiteracy still hasn't found its full stop because there are students who are not native speakers in the basics of reading such as mispronouncing letters that seem to have the same shape, sounding out certain letters and mistakenly sounding out the names of letters that seem to be the same. As a result, students will face difficulties in reading diphthongs, digraphs and consonants using smooth and clear pronunciation. The findings of this study also found that there are students who are not native speakers who are not interested in learning the Malay language which ultimately causes them not to try to master reading skills in the Malay language.

Rosly and Mokhtar (2021), have listed as many as eleven factors that can influence the issue of illiteracy among students at school. Among these factors are student motivation, student attendance at school, student placement, parental education level, peer influence, student interest in learning, student attitude, student environment, effectiveness of pre-school education, nutritional patterns and remedial classes followed by students. According to the researcher, the factors that cause the problem of illiteracy among students are not only caused by the students themselves but are also contributed by factors in their environment.

Student motivation to learn Malay subjects plays an important role in ensuring that students can master reading literacy skills at the primary school level. Although students do not belong to the group of native speakers, nevertheless with interest and motivation to learn, students can definitely master reading skills easily. In addition, the ability of teachers in schools to help students to be good at reading is sure that the issue of illiteracy can be curbed effectively.

The habit of students speaking using their mother tongue also contributes to illiteracy among students in primary schools (Lee Ngiik Ting & Faridah Mydin Kutty, 2022). This phenomenon often occurs among students who are not native speakers because they are used to communicating using their mother tongue or their respective ethnic languages at home. As a result, they will have difficulty in stemming syllables, spelling words and sounding syllables correctly and eventually causing them to be illiterate. Low motivation to learn among students is also the cause of illiteracy among students in this country. Student motivation is usually influenced by several other factors, especially the student's environment.

In conclusion, based on the factors that can be identified through the highlights of previous studies, it is proven that there are many factors that cause the issue of illiteracy in this country, especially among primary school students, that cannot be resolved definitively. Factors contributed by various parties necessarily require cooperation from various parties to be resolved. Malay is a very important subject and it seems to be a yardstick for students' academic performance in other subjects. Therefore, students at the primary school level must master basic Malay literacy skills before they can master achievement in other subjects.

Theme 2: Impact of Illiteracy among Primary School Students

Based on the research articles that have been arranged according to the theme in this study, there are several effects of the issue of illiteracy on primary school students. In this study there are six literature studies that discuss the effects of illiteracy among students.

The issue of illiteracy can have a bad effect on student achievement in learning. This is because students who cannot read well will not be able to understand the content of the lesson delivered by the teacher during the teaching and learning session. When the student has fallen behind too much because they cannot understand the content of the lesson, the student will lose interest in learning. In fact, there are students who choose not to attend school because they think it is a detrimental action because even though they attend school in full, they still do not get any benefit.

In addition, the issue of illiteracy among students in primary schools has made it difficult for Malay teachers to conduct PdP activities equally with students who are already good at reading. This is because the teacher needs to adjust PdP activities to the students' ability level where there are activities that require a long time to be implemented. In fact, there are also situations where teachers have to ignore students who are good at reading because they think they are already capable of completing assignments independently without the teacher's guidance. Unlike the case with students who are still illiterate, this group still needs full guidance from the teacher to understand the content of the lesson and complete the assignments given.

Reading skills are closely related to writing skills. Students who are not good at reading will have difficulty writing. This is because students who are still struggling to read take a long time to write letters, words and sentences. In addition, students who are not good at reading also tend to write letters one by one until they can form a word. This situation will cause students who are still illiterate to often fall behind every time the PdP session is implemented in class.

The complete failure of students to master reading skills has many negative impacts on student performance in school. If not curbed, this issue will definitely continue to spread among our society so that it can give a negative image related to the education system in this country. Students who are already good at reading certainly have a higher level of readiness to follow the learning sessions held by the teachers in the classroom.

Theme 3 : How to Overcome the Problem of Illiteracy among Primary School Students

The problem of illiteracy in this country requires cooperation from various parties to deal with it. When referring back to the factors that cause illiteracy among students, it is not only caused by students but also by other environmental factors such as the students' parents, teachers and friends. Therefore, in this section, the study will clearly discuss how to overcome the problem of illiteracy among primary school students by referring to the highlights of the research articles that have been selected.

Among them is that primary school teachers should be more prepared and creative in implementing teaching and learning sessions in the classroom. This statement is supported by Nur Faizah Saidin and Nur Azimah Mohd Bukhari (2023), who state that Malay teachers need to design facilitation activities to help illiterate students. Facilitation activities should be supported with interesting and effective teaching aids. Teachers in today's era should not only be bound to the measurements found in textbooks only, but educators need to diversify the way of delivery that can speed up student understanding, especially illiterate students. Sylvester Lau Yueh Wei, Alizah Lambri and Rosliah Kiting (2020), also think that the problem of illiteracy can be overcome if teachers are more agile in planning teaching activities to help illiterate students master reading skills.

In addition, Special Remedial classes are also believed to be able to help elementary school students who have illiteracy problems. However, this remedial class is more focused on students who still do not know the alphabet while students who can read but with a little guidance from the teacher are not eligible to attend classes in Special Remedial. Special Remedial Classes will usually be run by trained teachers as opposed to mainstream teachers who are less able to deal with or deal with illiterate students. This statement is supported by Rosly and Mokhtar (2021).

Students who belong to the group of illiterate students have a lower level of cognitive ability compared to students who are proficient in reading. This situation may be due to several factors such as health problems or learning problems as explained in the illiteracy factor aspect. Therefore, teachers should not use an overly formal approach to carry out teaching and learning sessions with students. Noor Azlinna Yasir and Jamaludin Badusah (2018), implementation of learning and facilitation sessions (PdPc) with a learning through playing approach is a creative 21st century approach that is believed to help illiterate students master reading literacy skills. Nur Faizah Saidin and Nur Azimah Mohd Bukhari (2023), also think that the lack of use of BBM during teaching and learning sessions is one of the factors in students not being able to master reading skills well.

Next, the problem of illiteracy can also be overcome by giving space and opportunities to children to socialize. According to Mohammad Nurulnizar Hussin, Zainiah Mohamed Isa and Basir (2022), the mastery of reading skills is a continuous learning process that occurs

when students or children communicate with other individuals. Students who are active in their social activities have a better development of the mind causing their cognitive level to be higher compared to students who are not social.

Finally, the study carried out by Jiani binti Jaman (2015), revealed the propriety of introducing Malay Language Special Remedial classes only without any mix of other subjects. This is because the Malay language is a very important subject that students master when they are in school. If the student is unable to master the literacy skills of reading Malay, it is certain that the student will also face problems in mastering reading skills for other subjects, especially English. Therefore, the school first needs to ensure that the students have mastered the reading skills of Malay before focusing on other subjects.

In conclusion, there are various methods that can be done to curb the problem of illiteracy in this country, especially among primary school students. However, it can not only be done by the students or the school but also requires the cooperation of the community. Students who receive strong support from various parties will certainly be more confident and enthusiastic to learn, especially in the effort to master reading skills.

Summary

The ability to read is a very important need in the world, especially among Malaysians. The progress and sophistication experienced by the country nowadays greatly requires the community in this country to be literate so that all the people of the country can together experience global progress. However, in order to ensure that the people in this country can enjoy these privileges, problems related to illiteracy must be curbed starting from its roots at the primary school level.

Based on the research articles that have been collected in this study, there is still a lack of research that debates the effects of illiteracy that will happen to students and society in this country in the current era of globalization if it is not curbed. Therefore, researchers in the future can carry out appropriate research so that it can be used as a guide and awareness to the people in this country about the negative effects of illiteracy. This is because there are many advantages that can be enjoyed by people who master reading skills such as being able to master noble values, increase self-confidence, increase knowledge and have extensive knowledge about current issues that are happening in the country or abroad.

Based on observation and research on previous research articles, the number of studies that describe the issue of illiteracy in rural schools is very less or almost non-existent. In fact, previous studies also discussed the issue of illiteracy in general and did not focus on the situation of rural schools. In addition, based on the researcher's research, it was also found that the research methodology used to collect data related to this issue is also very limited because most of them use questionnaire instruments in a quantitative design. According to the researcher, illiteracy factors need to be widely known by taking into account the perspectives of the parties closest to the students. In the context of this study, the closest to the students are the teachers at school. Therefore, it is very relevant that this study is carried out to find out what the factors and effects of illiteracy among Level One students are based on the perception of teachers who teach the subject of literacy in the school that is the location of the study. The results of this study will certainly not be biased because the study

informants are free to express their opinions based on their real experiences and observations. Therefore, a study that uses a qualitative approach can certainly gather the necessary research data in accordance with the objectives of the study that have been set.

The issue of illiteracy among the community in our country needs to be effectively addressed starting from its roots. The phenomenon that happened in our country saw that there are still many illiterate adults. Most of these people live in rural areas. This means that these illiterate adults do face problems in mastering basic reading skills starting at the school level. This is evidenced by the government's efforts starting in 2008 where a policy was introduced which is the Adult Class for Orang Asli and Penan Parents (KEDAP). This program aims to reduce the illiteracy rate among the Orang Asli and Penan communities throughout Malaysia. Therefore, the researcher felt that a study on the problem of illiteracy in the selected study location was very appropriate to do. In addition, the majority of residents and students in the study location are Penan. Therefore, it is hoped that through the results of this study, it will help to some extent in realizing the success of the policies that have been introduced by the government in eradicating the issue of illiteracy in this country.

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