

Integrative Holistic Education: A Framework for Enhancing Early Childhood Numeracy and Literacy Development

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the holistic integrative education implemented by schools in improving the development of numeracy and literacy in early childhood. This study uses a qualitative approach of the case study type, where researchers try to reveal the meaning of improving the development of numeracy and literacy in children. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews and documentation. Data analysis is carried out through data display, data reduction and drawing research conclusions. The results of the study show that holistic integrative education implemented by schools in improving the development of numeracy and literacy in children is carried out through; integration of numeracy and literacy in learning, development of social and emotional skills, involvement of parents and communities, supportive learning environments. This study provides implications that the implementation of holistic integrative education that integrates numeracy, literacy, social and emotional skills, and involves parents and communities, can create a learning environment that supports the development of children as a whole. This strengthens the importance of a holistic approach in early childhood education.

Keywords: *Holistic Integrative Education, Numeracy Learning, Children's Literacy*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang pendidikan holistik integratif yang diterapkan oleh sekolah dalam meningkatkan perkembangan numerasi dan literasi pada anak usia dini. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus, di mana peneliti berusaha untuk mengungkap makna tentang peningkatan perkembangan numerasi dan literasi anak. Teknik pengumpulan datanya dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui display data, reduksi data dan penarikan kesimpulan penelitian. Hasil penelitian bahwa pendidikan holistik integratif yang diterapkan oleh sekolah dalam meningkatkan perkembangan numerasi dan literasi anak dilakukan melalui; pengintegrasian numerasi dan literasi dalam pembelajaran, pengembangan keterampilan sosial dan emosional, keterlibatan orang tua dan komunitas, lingkungan pembelajaran yang mendukung. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bahwa penerapan pendidikan holistik integratif yang mengintegrasikan numerasi, literasi, keterampilan sosial, dan emosional, serta melibatkan orang tua dan komunitas, dapat menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang mendukung perkembangan anak secara menyeluruh. Hal ini memperkuat pentingnya pendekatan holistik dalam pendidikan anak usia dini.

Kata Kunci: *Pendidikan Holistik Integratif, Pembelajaran Numerasi, Literasi Anak*

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for children's literacy and numeracy skills, which are vital for their academic success and daily life (Rozi et al., 2023; Manshur et al., 2023). However, research shows a significant gap between theory and practice in early education, especially regarding numeracy and literacy development. Despite recognizing its importance, many children struggle with basic skills such as reading and math in their early years. This issue is prevalent in several regions, including Indonesia, where insufficient focus on these foundational skills contributes to long-term educational setbacks (Muhith et al., 2023; Sabran et al., 2023). The main question arises: Why are literacy and numeracy still challenging despite their acknowledged importance? A key reason is the lack of an integrative approach that combines cognitive, emotional, and social aspects in early childhood education. This research explores how a more holistic educational model could bridge this gap and improve children's literacy and numeracy skills, offering a more comprehensive solution to early education problems.

In real-world educational settings, the issue of inadequate literacy and numeracy skills among young children persists despite various efforts to improve education quality (Baharun, 2024; Khomairotusshiyamah, 2025; Najiburrahman et al., 2025). Children often struggle to grasp basic concepts such as letter recognition and number understanding. These difficulties are compounded by the limited involvement of parents and the community in supporting the learning process, which further hinders children's development. Although early education programs are in place, they often focus heavily on cognitive aspects, neglecting development's emotional, social, and physical aspects, which are equally crucial in early childhood learning. This discrepancy highlights the need for a more integrative approach that addresses all areas of child development. By examining the current situation at TK Negeri Pembina Balen, this study aims to understand how an integrative holistic education approach could improve children's literacy and numeracy skills, contributing to better outcomes for future education.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of early childhood literacy and numeracy, highlighting their impact on long-term academic success (Abella et al., 2024; Laxman, 2024; Tañiza et al., 2024). These studies often focus on improving one skill at a time, typically treating literacy and numeracy as separate components of child development. However, research on integrating these skills with emotional, social, and physical development remains scarce. Some studies also suggest the importance of character-building and social skills in early education (Ginting, 2024; Mustoip et al., 2023; Sofyan & Saputra, 2022). However, there is a limited exploration of how these aspects can contribute to developing literacy and numeracy. In the Indonesian context, very few studies address the application of a holistic, integrative approach in early childhood education. This gap presents an opportunity for further research, which this study seeks to fill. By examining how such an approach can enhance literacy and numeracy, this research uniquely contributes to the field, particularly in Indonesia's rural education settings.

The novelty of this study lies in its approach to integrating literacy and numeracy development with the emotional, social, and physical aspects of child

development in early childhood education. While much of the existing research treats literacy and numeracy separately, this study proposes a more comprehensive approach considering the entire child development spectrum. The primary research question is: How can a holistic, integrative education approach help young children master basic numeracy and literacy skills? This question is crucial because it addresses the current gap in research regarding integrating cognitive, emotional, and social learning in early childhood education. By answering this question, this study aims to propose a model that can be applied in real educational settings, particularly in rural areas like Bojonegoro, to improve children's overall development and enhance their ability to acquire foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

This study argues that an integrative holistic education approach, which simultaneously addresses cognitive, emotional, social, and physical aspects of child development, can significantly improve early childhood literacy and numeracy skills. The current educational methods, which tend to isolate cognitive learning from emotional and social development, are insufficient in preparing children for long-term academic success. This study posits that by using a holistic model, children will improve their basic numeracy and literacy and develop a well-rounded set of skills that support their overall well-being and readiness for future challenges. Applying this approach in educational institutions can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of holistic learning in improving early childhood education outcomes, filling a critical gap in theory and practice.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach (Mishra & Dey, 2022; Pyo et al., 2023). This design was chosen because the study aims to understand the phenomenon in depth in a specific context, namely the application of integrative holistic education in improving the development of early childhood numeracy and literacy at TK Negeri Pembina Balen, Bojonegoro. Case studies allow researchers to explore how a holistic approach is applied in the school and how it impacts the development of children's literacy and numeracy. This study aims to explore understanding of existing educational practices in the field, the challenges faced, and the successes achieved. By choosing a case study design, this study focuses on an in-depth analysis of one educational context, providing a richer and more contextual understanding of the problem being studied (Adams et al., 2022; Schoepf & Klimow, 2022).

This research was conducted at TK Negeri Pembina Balen, Bojonegoro. The selection of this location was based on several considerations. First, this school is an early childhood education institution that has a fairly well-known educational program in the area. Second, this school seeks to implement various approaches to improve the quality of education, including in teaching literacy and numeracy. Third, based on initial observations, despite efforts to improve the quality of education, there are still challenges in developing children's literacy and numeracy. Therefore, this location is very relevant for research that aims to explore the implementation of holistic integrative education. This study is expected to provide deeper insight into how a holistic approach can be applied in a local context and have a positive impact on children in the kindergarten.

The data in this study were collected using in-depth interview techniques and participant observation. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, principals,

and several parents of students to obtain information about the implementation of holistic integrative education in Pembina Balen State Kindergarten. Participatory observation was conducted by researchers being directly involved in classroom learning activities to understand how literacy and numeracy are taught in a holistic context. Data collection was carried out for three months, where researchers interacted directly with participants and observed the learning process.

Data analysis was carried out using a qualitative data analysis model consisting of several stages; first, Data Display, namely Data that has been condensed will be presented in narrative and table form to facilitate understanding and further analysis. The presentation of this data will show the relationship between various aspects of holistic education and its impact on child development. Second, Data Reduction, namely data obtained through interviews and observations will be filtered and summarized to highlight the main themes related to integrative holistic education and the development of literacy and numeracy. Third, Data Verification, namely researchers will verify the truth of the findings that have been collected by involving data triangulation, namely comparing the results of interviews, observations, and relevant literature (Asipi et al., 2022; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). Verification is carried out to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data obtained and its consistency with the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Integrating Numeracy and Literacy in Learning

Integrating numeracy and literacy in learning at TK Negeri Pembina Balen, Bojonegoro means combining basic mathematical concepts and reading and writing skills in learning activities designed for early childhood. Numeracy here includes children's ability to recognize numbers, count, and understand basic mathematical concepts, while literacy refers to the ability to read, write, and communicate effectively. These two skills are integrated in learning through a fun and contextual approach, connecting theory with children's daily lives, so that they can develop their critical and creative thinking skills.

Table 1. Integration of Numeracy and Literacy in Learning

Interview Excerpts	Indicators	Informant
"We use songs and games involving numbers and words to teach children."	Integrated Learning Approach	Teacher
"Children learn about numbers through stories and pictures they create with their friends."	Contextual and Collaborative Learning	Teacher
"We encourage children to write and read through everyday activities such as shopping and visiting."	Real-Life and Experiential Learning	Principal

Table 1 shows that the integration of numeracy and literacy at TK Negeri Pembina Balen is carried out with a fun and contextual approach. Excerpts from interviews with Maya Anjarwati show that the integrated learning approach is very effective in teaching the concept of numbers and words, using songs and games as fun media for children. This is in line with other findings that show that learning involving collaboration and the use of pictures and stories strengthens children's understanding of numeracy and literacy. Sriani Sulistyawati said that through collaboration between friends, children not only learn numbers and letters, but also develop their social skills.

In addition, Sumianto as the principal emphasized the importance of connecting learning with children's daily lives, such as through shopping and visiting activities, which provide a real context for literacy and numeracy. The results of observations in the field confirmed that the methods used by teachers at TK Negeri Pembina Balen were very effective in integrating numeracy and literacy. Activities such as making story books together and educational games involving counting numbers or recognizing letters looked very interesting to children. The researchers also observed that children showed high curiosity and active involvement in every activity involving both aspects. This shows that a learning approach that connects theory with real experience can improve children's understanding and interest in numeracy and literacy.

From the data collected, it can be understood that the integration of numeracy and literacy in learning at school is very effective. Children not only learn the concept of numbers and letters separately, but also understand how both skills are applied in the context of their daily lives. Through a fun and relevant approach, children can develop their critical thinking skills and creativity, which will support their academic development in the future.

The pattern that emerged from the results of this study shows that integrated learning between numeracy and literacy has a positive impact on children's understanding. The learning process that combines these two aspects not only improves children's academic abilities but also motivates them to be more actively involved in learning activities. Therefore, this approach is highly recommended to be applied in other kindergartens as a holistic and effective learning model.

Development of Social and Emotional Skills

The development of social and emotional skills in Pembina Balen State Kindergarten refers to efforts made to help children develop their ability to interact with peers, recognize and manage their emotions, and build effective communication skills. These social and emotional skills are very important for the development of early childhood, because they help them to be better prepared to face social challenges in the future. In the field, the development of social and emotional skills is applied through activities that involve cooperation, problem solving, and emotional management in real social situations, such as playing together, sharing, and discussing in groups.

Sri Wahyuni as a teacher explained that group games that require children to work together are very effective in developing their social skills. This activity encourages children to learn to speak, listen, and cooperate with their friends. Researchers interpret that through this kind of game, children not only learn about cooperation, but also learn the importance of communication in groups. Furthermore, Maya Anjarwati emphasized the importance of teaching children to share and resolve conflicts with their friends. Through these activities, children learn to recognize and manage their emotions, and find solutions in situations that may trigger feelings of frustration or anger.

During the observation, the researcher noted that Pembina Balen State Kindergarten children were highly active in group activities, eagerly following the teacher's instructions to collaborate and share tasks. When disagreements arose, the teacher patiently guided them to resolve issues through discussion. Despite being in the developmental stage, the children managed their emotions with the teacher's

support and became more open in their interactions. This highlights the positive impact of activities that enhance their social and emotional skills.

From the data collected, it can be understood that the development of children's social and emotional skills at Pembina Balen State Kindergarten has been implemented with an effective approach. Activities such as group games, sharing, and conflict resolution through discussion allow children to learn to work together, manage emotions, and communicate better. Teachers play an important role in guiding children to overcome their social and emotional challenges, and with the right guidance, children can develop skills that are very useful for their future lives.

The development of social and emotional skills in schools is successfully carried out through a structured and comprehensive approach. Children learn not only through direct instruction, but also through real-life experiences in working together, sharing, and resolving conflicts. This shows that active involvement in social activities inside and outside the classroom is essential for children's social and emotional development. Thus, this approach can be applied as a model for early childhood education in other settings.

Parent and Community Involvement

Parental and community involvement in learning at Pembina Balen Kindergarten refers to the active participation of parents and community members in supporting children's learning activities at school. This includes collaboration between parents, teachers, and the community in creating a learning environment that supports children's holistic development. This involvement can be in the form of participation in school activities, regular communication between parents and teachers, and support from the community in the form of resources or additional activities that enrich children's learning.

One of the parents said that, "We are always invited to participate in activities such as book parties and other outdoor activities." Parental participation in school activities such as this shows their active involvement in supporting children's learning. The parent explained that activities such as book parties not only introduce children to the world of literacy, but also strengthen the relationship between the school and parents. Parental participation in these activities gives them the opportunity to be directly involved in their children's learning process, as well as contributing to creating a supportive learning environment.

An administrator from the parent association mentioned, "The community helps by donating learning tools and volunteering at school events," highlighting their significant role in supporting children's education. These contributions enrich learning experiences beyond what the school provides. Community volunteers also create a warm, engaging atmosphere that enhances children's social interactions. Parents at Pembina Balen State Kindergarten are actively involved in school activities, such as book parties and outdoor events, directly contributing to children's literacy development. The community's support through donations and volunteering further enriches children's education outside the school, providing valuable resources and experiences.



Figure 1. Parent and Community Involvement

The researcher assessed that this flow shows the importance of close cooperation between parents, communities, and schools in creating deeper and more comprehensive learning experiences for children. Parental involvement and community support provide more strength to the educational process carried out in schools, enriching learning with various activities that connect theory and practice in everyday life.

From the data obtained, it can be understood that parental and community involvement in learning at school has a significant positive impact. Parental participation and community support not only improve the quality of activities at school but also create a more dynamic learning environment for children. Collaboration between parents, teachers, and the community allows for more creative and enjoyable learning, which in turn supports the development of children's literacy and numeracy.

The pattern seen from the results of this study is that the involvement of parents and the community in the education of children at TK Negeri Pembina Balen is very integral to the success of the learning process. Parents who are actively involved in school activities and the community that supports with resources and manpower strengthen the education system in the school. These data show the importance of collaboration between home, school, and community in supporting the holistic development of children.

Supportive Learning Environment

A supportive learning environment at Pembina Balen State Kindergarten refers to the physical and social atmosphere and conditions in the school that can encourage and accelerate children's development in learning. This environment includes various factors, such as a comfortable and pleasant classroom layout, the availability of appropriate learning aids, and a harmonious relationship between teachers, students, and parents. A supportive learning environment also includes positive interactions between students, which can facilitate children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. A good environment does not only focus on the physical aspect, but also on the social aspect that creates a safe, pleasant learning climate and stimulates children to actively participate.

Table 1. supportive learning environment at Pembina Balen State Kindergarten

Interview Excerpts	Interview Excerpts	Informant
"We design the classroom to make children feel comfortable, with lots of interesting and interactive teaching materials."	"We design the classroom to make children feel comfortable, with lots of interesting and interactive teaching materials."	Teacher
"We often hold group activities outside the classroom to create a more lively learning atmosphere."	Kegiatan Pembelajaran yang Menyenangkan dan Kolaboratif	Teacher
"We also include natural elements in the classroom, such as plants and open areas, to make children feel closer to the environment."	Lingkungan Fisik yang Mendukung Keseimbangan Alam dan Belajar	Teacher
"It is important for us to maintain a good relationship with parents, because it supports a positive atmosphere in the	Kerjasama dengan Orang Tua dan Lingkungan Sekitar	Principal

Table 2 shows the importance of creating a supportive learning environment in Pembina Balen Kindergarten, with various approaches aimed at increasing children's comfort and involvement in the learning process. One of the main aspects highlighted is the design of a comfortable and attractive classroom, where the presence of interactive teaching materials plays an important role in motivating children to be more active in learning activities. This creates a pleasant atmosphere and supports their cognitive development.

In addition, collaborative activities carried out outside the classroom are an important element in creating a more lively learning atmosphere. Through these group activities, children are invited to learn to work together, share, and develop their social skills in a freer situation that is not limited by the classroom. An environment that integrates natural elements, such as plants and open areas, also has a positive influence on children's emotional balance, making them more connected to the surrounding nature. No less important, good collaboration between the school and parents plays a role in building a supportive atmosphere in the classroom. With this synergy, a positive learning environment is created, which encourages children's overall development, both socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

During field observations, researchers noted that the classroom was indeed designed with great attention to children's comfort. In addition to the various teaching materials such as story books, educational toys, and interesting props, the classroom is also equipped with an area that allows children to move and interact socially. In addition, group activities held outside the classroom also seemed very enjoyable and provided space for children to collaborate and share experiences. These activities not only develop their social skills, but also give them the opportunity to learn in a more natural atmosphere and reduce the pressure of learning in the classroom.

From the data collected, it can be concluded that a supportive learning environment at Pembina Balen State Kindergarten is created through a combination of comfortable and pleasant physical classroom conditions and learning activities that involve children actively and collaboratively. With a classroom equipped with interesting teaching materials and group activities outside the classroom, children can learn in an atmosphere that not only stimulates their creativity but also strengthens their social and cooperation skills.

The pattern that emerged from the results of this study shows that a supportive learning environment can be created by combining comfortable and attractive physical conditions, as well as activities that involve social interaction and collaboration between children. This shows that an effective environment for learning depends not only on the physical aspects of the classroom, but also on the way learning activities are structured to support the development of children's social and emotional skills. Collaborative and enjoyable outdoor activities are key to creating an active and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

Discussion

In this study, it was found that the integration of numeracy and literacy in learning at TK Negeri Pembina Balen greatly supports the development of children's cognitive and social abilities. This finding aligns with the emphasis that numeracy and literacy skills must be developed simultaneously at an early stage of education to

create a strong foundation for children's academic development (Laxman, 2024; Shvartsman & Shaul, 2023; Sumarno et al., 2022). In the field, activities that combine number and word learning with fun activities have proven to be very effective in attracting children's attention and motivating them to participate more actively. However, this study also shows that although the integration of numeracy and literacy is highly considered, challenges remain in creating the right balance between the two, given the need to explore both areas in depth in a limited time.

Furthermore, in terms of the development of social and emotional skills, the findings of this study indicate that activities that emphasize collaboration and cooperation between children, such as group games and joint conflict resolution, can help them develop important social and emotional skills (Damanik, 2023; Hidayah & Khadijah, 2023; Qondias et al., 2024). This is in line with finding that social and emotional skills can develop through positive social interactions, where children learn to manage emotions and communicate with peers (Garaigordobil et al., 2022; Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024; Váradi, 2022). This study highlights the importance of the role of teachers in guiding children to manage emotions and work together with their friends. However, the challenge of managing conflicts between children that arise outside of structured activities is still something that needs to be considered in the application of this theory in the field.

The findings on parental and community involvement also show that there is consistency with the theory that underlines the importance of collaboration between schools and the surrounding environment in supporting children's learning. Jeynes (2024) and Sengonul (2022) stated that parental involvement in children's education has a significant impact on their academic success. In this study, parents who were directly involved in school activities, such as book parties and group activities, helped create a more conducive learning atmosphere and strengthened children's emotional ties to education. Likewise, community support that contributed teaching aids or volunteered in school activities also enriched children's learning experiences (Afreen & Norton, 2024; McWayne et al., 2022). The practical implications of these findings are the importance of increasing collaboration between parents, teachers, and communities to create more inclusive and holistic learning environments.

A supportive learning environment, both physically and socially, is one of the main findings in this study. Research shows that classrooms designed with comfort in mind, as well as activities involving natural elements, such as plants and open areas, have a positive impact on children's well-being and concentration. This is in line with the learning environment, which explains that a supportive physical atmosphere can increase learning effectiveness by creating a safe, comfortable, and creative space (Charteris et al., 2024; Hardie et al., 2022). In practice, implementing a classroom design that takes into account natural aspects can be a solution to creating a healthier and more enjoyable environment for children, which has a direct impact on their engagement in learning.

Overall, the findings of this study provide important contributions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study strengthens the argument that integrating various aspects of the learning environment, such as numeracy, literacy, social skills, and parental and community involvement, is essential to supporting the holistic development of early childhood. The practical implication of this study is the need to implement a more holistic approach in early childhood education, involving

various environmental elements to create a learning atmosphere that supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Therefore, it is important for educators to consider these factors in designing and implementing an effective curriculum in schools (Wahid et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study provides important findings regarding the importance of integrating numeracy and literacy in learning, the development of social and emotional skills, parental and community involvement, and a supportive learning environment. The lesson that can be taken is that a holistic approach involving various aspects of early childhood education is very important to support the overall development of children. The implementation of activities that combine academic learning with social and emotional development, as well as collaboration between schools, parents, and communities, can create a more supportive environment for children to develop their potential. This study highlights the importance of creating a fun and conducive learning atmosphere so that children can learn with full motivation and feel more connected to the educational process.

The strength of this paper lies in its contribution to the science of early childhood education, especially regarding the integration of various elements that support the overall development of children. This study reinforces the importance of parental and community involvement and a supportive physical environment as an integral part of educational success. However, the limitation of this study lies in the sample that is limited to one school, so the results may not be fully generalizable to all schools. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of research by involving more diverse schools and areas, as well as exploring more deeply other factors that influence the successful integration of numeracy, literacy and social skills in early childhood.

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