

## Weaving Hope to Achieve Dreams Through Literacy: Literacy Assistance and Academic Guidance for Refugee Children at Yppgi Napua Primary School, Highlands Papua

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### ABSTRACT

Children are a nation's valuable asset and must be continuously educated and guided, both academically and in terms of character development. Among the children who require special attention are the refugee children from Nduga District, who are pursuing primary education at YPPGI Napua Primary School. The primary issue they face is their low literacy skills in reading, which negatively affects their academic abilities and further limits their ability to follow lessons, ultimately impacting their overall learning outcomes. Therefore, this community service program aims to train and guide refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School, Highlands Papua, who struggle with literacy and academic skills. The method used in this program is based on a participatory approach, where each student is provided with guidance tailored to their abilities and needs through five stages: Initial Coordination and Preparation, Pretest and Student Grouping, Reading and Academic Tutoring, Posttest and Progress Evaluation, and Advanced Learning and Final Testing. The results showed a significant improvement in reading ability and academic understanding. The final test conducted at the end of the program indicated that around 85% of the students made substantial progress. In conclusion, the literacy and academic tutoring program for refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School successfully achieved its primary goal of improving students' literacy and academic knowledge, and had a positive impact on their motivation and self-confidence in facing exams and advancing to junior high school. This program made a significant contribution to the development of education in the refugee area and could serve as an effective solution for improving education quality in remote regions, offering inspiration for the implementation of similar models in other areas facing similar challenges.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the main challenges faced by children at YPPGI Napua Primary School, Highlands Papua, is their low literacy level, particularly in reading. This issue is exacerbated by the lack of access to quality educational materials and the limited availability of teachers capable of providing appropriate academic guidance. Consequently, many refugee students struggle to keep up with lessons, ultimately affecting their overall academic performance (Simanjuntak, 2020, p. 45).

The issue of low literacy and academic skills among refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School, Highlands Papua, has become a critical focus in the development of basic education in this area. Refugee children from Nduga District who attend school in Napua face various challenges, ranging from limited access to education to a lack of academic support in schools. This condition directly impacts their literacy and academic abilities, particularly in essential subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Indonesian. In line with this, Khumairaa et al. (2023) revealed that reading interest in Pamupukan village remains relatively low (Khumairaa et al., 2023, pp. 4470–4477), which is attributed to the difficulty in accessing reading materials, low awareness of the importance of reading, and children's dependence on gadgets (Hadi, 2005) dan (Aswirna & Ritonga, 2020, pp. 47–75).

Therefore, academic assistance is a necessary effort for any individual or institution that is aware of the importance of literacy skills for primary school-aged children, especially those who face learning difficulties. Assistance helps students overcome learning barriers through direct intervention and structured guidance. In the context of basic education, literacy refers to the ability to read, write, and comprehend information effectively. Basic literacy is a crucial foundation that determines a student's ability to absorb other learning materials.

Based on literature reviews, the issue of reading and low academic skills among refugee children is not a new phenomenon. Previous research has shown that children from refugee backgrounds tend to face obstacles in developing basic academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic (Prasetyo & Rahayu, 2019, p. 77). However, various literacy programs implemented in remote areas have successfully demonstrated significant improvements in children's literacy skills (Nurhayati, 2021, p. 123). Nevertheless, there are still few literacy programs specifically focused on refugee children in the Highlands Papua region, particularly at YPPGI Napua Primary School (Suryadi, 2018, p. 95).

Therefore, this program is designed to provide training and academic guidance with a focus on improving literacy skills and academic preparation for refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School. The aim of this community service is to train and guide refugee students who are not yet proficient in reading, so they can master basic literacy skills. In addition, the program aims to enhance students' academic knowledge in preparation for exams and equip them to continue their education at the junior high school level. This literacy program is expected to build a strong foundation for students to improve their academic performance in the future (Setiawan, 2022, p. 112)).

Based on the existing facts and objectives, this program is highly significant. This is because the ability to read and comprehend lessons is a fundamental skill required for students to grow academically and socially (Rahman & Dewi, 2021, p. 67). With the implementation of an academic guidance program focused on refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School, it is hoped that these students can catch up on their academic setbacks and have a greater opportunity to continue their education at a higher level (Fadilah, 2019, p. 134). By involving tutors from various disciplines and through a systematic approach, this program is expected to serve as a model that can be applied in other areas facing similar challenges.

## METHOD

This community service activity conducted at YPPGI Napua Primary School, Highlands Papua, focused on reading and academic guidance for refugee children from Nduga District. The program was conducted over one semester, lasting 16 weeks, and took place every Saturday from 9:00 to 11:30 AM local time. A total of 98 students from grades 4, 5, and 6 participated in the program, assisted by 6 student tutors and 6 field supervising lecturers from three study programs: Primary School Teacher Education, English Education, and Mathematics Education. The implementation of the program followed several stages as outlined below.

The method used in this program was based on a participatory approach, where each student was provided with guidance tailored to their abilities and needs. Periodic evaluations through pretests, post-tests, and the final test allowed the community service team to adjust methods and materials to be more effective in helping refugee students improve their academic abilities.

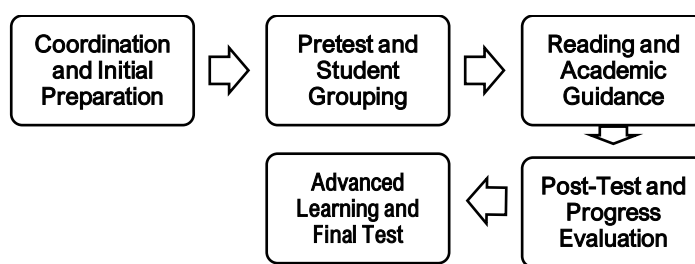


FIGURE 1. Flowchart of Program Activities

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Over the course of the 16-week program, significant improvements were observed in the students' literacy and academic skills. The literacy assistance and academic tutoring program for refugee children at YPPGI Napua Primary School, Nduga District, Highlands Papua, was conducted over one semester, from February 17 to June 16, 2024. A total of 98 students from grades 4, 5, and 6 participated in the program.

The program began with a pretest during the first meeting to assess the students' initial abilities. Of the 56 students who attended the first pretest, they were grouped based on their reading and academic proficiency levels. The number of students increased to 96 during subsequent meetings. From the third to the sixth meetings, basic reading instruction and tutoring in English and Mathematics were provided. The first post-test was conducted during the seventh meeting to evaluate the students' improvement after several sessions.

After the first post-test, tutoring continued with more advanced materials for students who had mastered basic reading skills. The second post-test was conducted during the twelfth meeting. In the final meeting, which was the sixteenth session, a final test was conducted, attended by 84 students, or approximately 85.7% of the participants. Although there were fluctuations in attendance, especially during the fourteenth meeting, the program successfully met its target, with a high participation rate throughout the program.



FIGURE 2. Literacy Assistance

This literacy and academic tutoring program was conducted over 16 sessions, with the participation of 98 refugee students from grades 4, 5, and 6 at YPPGI Napua Primary School. In the first meeting on February 17, 2024, a pretest was conducted with the 56 students in attendance. The pretest aimed to assess the students' basic literacy and academic skills, allowing for appropriate student grouping. In subsequent meetings, more students participated, reaching 96 by the second meeting, and they were divided into several groups based on their reading, English, and Mathematics abilities.



**FIGURE 3.** (a) Tutoring in reading level 1, (b) Tutoring in Mathematics, (c) Tutoring in reading level 2, (d) Tutoring in English

An improvement was observed in students during the tutoring process, particularly after the seventh meeting when the first post-test was conducted. The results indicated that the majority of students showed significant progress in their reading and academic abilities, although some students required more intensive tutoring. Setyo et al. (2023) reinforced the findings of this assistance through their strengthening program, which demonstrated that after implementing both group and individual strengthening programs using media tailored to specific needs, there was a significant improvement in the literacy skills of children in Yeflio Village. These improvements include letter recognition, reading fluency, writing ability, and numeracy skills (Setyo et al., 2023).

In the thirteenth to sixteenth meetings, the main focus was on providing advanced tutoring for students who had demonstrated progress, with an emphasis on advanced reading skills and enrichment in English and Mathematics. Throughout the program, the student attendance rate remained above 85% each week, except during the fourteenth meeting, when only 51 students attended due to a graduation ceremony for grade 6 students held the day before. The final evaluation results showed that approximately 85.7% of the students experienced significant improvement in both literacy and academic skills. These findings are presented in the table below:

**TABLE 1.** Development Levels of Reading, English, Mathematics, and Exam Confidence

Aspect	Description of Results	Number of Students Affected	Percentage
Reading Ability	Significant improvement after intensive tutoring	84 out of 98 students	85,7 %
English Language Ability	Improved basic understanding after tutoring	76 out of 98 students	77,6%

Aspect	Description of Results	Number of Students Affected	Percentage
Mathematics Ability	Significant improvement in students with difficulties	72 out of 98 students	73,4%
Attendance Rate per Session	Students who consistently attended all 16 sessions	84 students	85,7%
Confidence in Facing Exams	Increased confidence and preparedness for exams	80 out of 98 students	81,6%

The results of this program indicate the success of the literacy and academic tutoring program for refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School. These findings align with other studies that emphasize the importance of an integrated approach to improving literacy among children in remote and underdeveloped areas. For example, Williams (2015) found that intensive literacy interventions in areas with limited educational access can significantly enhance reading ability in a relatively short period (Williams, 2015, p. 112).

Furthermore, this program had a positive impact not only on academic abilities but also on students' confidence. As Mulyana (2020) pointed out, tutoring programs that involve active student participation and curriculum adjustments based on individual needs can increase students' motivation to learn (Mulyana, 2020, p. 85). This was evident in this program, where many students who initially struggled to keep up with lessons showed progress after attending several tutoring sessions.

However, there were some challenges that need to be addressed. As Harsono (2018) highlighted, the sustainability of tutoring programs largely depends on the support from various stakeholders, including schools and local communities (Harsono, 2018, p. 76). In this context, coordination between the school, teachers, and tutors was a key factor in the program's success. This statement is reinforced by the research conducted by Hoerunisa and Fajar (2023), which found that the active involvement of schools, learning centers, and the local community is crucial to the success of this literacy program (Hoerunisa & Fajar, 2023, p. 3840). Additionally, external factors, such as the students' socio-economic conditions, also influenced the effectiveness of the program, which requires specific strategies to reach the students most in need.

Based on the results of activities conducted over the course of one semester, it is evident that the literacy and academic tutoring program had a significant impact on the refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School. The pretest and post-test activities demonstrated an improvement in the students' reading abilities and academic understanding from the initial to the final meetings. This shows that the tutoring method used, which involved grouping students according to their initial abilities and providing intensive assistance, was effective in helping students who struggled with reading and preparing them for academic exams.

When compared to other studies that discuss literacy programs for children in remote areas, this program stands out in terms of its success in maintaining student participation levels, despite challenges such as a lack of learning facilities and environmental factors. Widiastuti's research (2020) stated that literacy programs in remote areas often face difficulties in maintaining student attendance (Widiastuti, 2020). However, good coordination with the school and teachers in this program successfully minimized these obstacles.

Additionally, the results of this program also reflect that systematic tutoring, with the division of students into groups based on ability, can accelerate literacy improvement. Children who initially could not read well experienced significant improvement after receiving intensive tutoring. This aligns with Rahmawati's (2019) findings, which stated that intensive academic tutoring can improve students' abilities in refugee areas (Rahmawati, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

The literacy and academic tutoring program for refugee students at YPPGI Napua Primary School successfully achieved its main objectives, which were to improve students' literacy and academic knowledge. The evaluation results showed that more than 85% of the students who participated in this program experienced significant improvements in their abilities. In addition to academic improvements, the program also had a positive impact on students' motivation to learn and their confidence in facing exams and further studies at the junior high school level. Through a systematic and intensive approach, students who had previously struggled with reading were able to make significant progress in their academic understanding.

Moreover, effective coordination between the community service team and the school was a key factor in maintaining student participation. Despite challenges, such as student absenteeism during the fourteenth meeting, the program managed to maintain a stable number of participants until the end. As a result, this program contributed significantly to educational development in refugee areas, helping refugee children prepare for future academic challenges, and it can serve as an effective model for improving the quality of education in remote areas. The program also provides inspiration for the implementation of similar models in other areas facing similar challenges.

Nevertheless, limitations in terms of resources and coordination with local communities must be considered to ensure that such programs are sustainable and have a broader impact in the future. Further research is needed to explore the factors influencing the effectiveness of tutoring programs for refugee students in various geographical and social contexts.

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