Banning Novels at Schools in Indonesia: An Investigation of Education Policy Execution

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Abstract
Novel is one of the literary works that people like to read for several reasons. The readers are not only adults but also teenagers and children. Novels can be a good source of knowledge for everyone including students. Reading novels can give many positive impacts in terms of language and emotions. However, the existence of novels is banned at some schools in Indonesia. The banning is based on several reasons. This paper investigated the perspectives of students and teachers related to the banning of novels in a school in Indonesia. This research used a descriptive qualitative design. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students and teachers at the school. The result showed that there were several problems related to the use of the novels in terms of kinds and the reading time of the novels. However, the use of novels is also beneficial in terms of emotion, habits, and knowledge. Considering the advantages and the disadvantages of novels at school, this research provided suggestions related to the ban of novels in terms of kinds of novels and reading time.

Keywords: Banning; Novels; Policy; Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Novel becomes one of the literary works that many people like to enjoy. People read novels for some reason. Some people read novels for academic purposes while others for non-academic ones. Related to academic purposes, reading novels can be used to fulfill some requirements of a subject while in the term of non-academic purposes, reading novels can be a good habit someone has. Reading novels provides beneficial things for the readers. By reading, the readers will be more insightful since their brain will perform all its functions properly (Kourkouta et al., 2018).

Novel readers would also get benefits in terms of language, emotions, and reading comprehension. By reading, the readers experienced developing in language and vocabulary. The readers would also improve the emotional intelligence that trains them to be able to detect and understand other people's emotions. It made the readers able to navigate a better social relationship in their real-life (Haruna, 2019; Rachmijati & Anggraeni, 2019). Another benefit was related to reading comprehension. By reading, the readers would improve their reading comprehension skills since the more people read, the easier they comprehend the meaning implicitly and explicitly as well (Wahyudi, 2015).

Realizing the benefits of reading novels, not all schools promote novels to be used at schools. Moreover, some schools banned novels at school. One example was the rule of bringing and reading novels in boarding schools. Novels could stimulate the readers to do the things like in the story of the novels. Novels as literary works could influence people in real life (Al-Faki & Siddiek, 2013). The readers could be inspired to do similar things for some reason. For example, when the readers read a romance-based novel, it could inspire the readers to do the same or copy what the characters in the novel did in their real life. Therefore, the ban on novels could be considered at schools.

In the Junior High School of Amanatul Ummah, there were no specific rules regarding the existence of novels for students. There were pros and cons to it. Some teachers allowed students to bring and read novels while some others considered prohibiting the students to bring and read the novels. Both of them -pros and cons- stand in their beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of the existence of novels at school or boarding school in this case. There was no clear rule applied in the school related to the existence of the novels.

Some research related to the ban of things at schools has been conducted. The first was entitled *The ban on mobile phones in the schools in India: A probe to augment efficacy in policy execution* (Goswami & Premkumar, 2019). The result showed that cell phones gave positive and negative impacts on students. The positive impact was related to the safety feeling and communication with parents while the negative ones were in terms of misuse and content of porn. The second research was entitled *Jazz, Drama, and a Librarian: Advocating Against Book Censorship in Public Schools* (Carlson, 2018). The article showed that students have a right to choose books they want to read and learn from. Denying the students' chances to access books was wrong. Schools should be able to serve the students' needs related to books. The research did not explore the pros and cons related to the banning of certain books. Therefore, this research is intended to investigate the policy related to the ban of novels in junior high schools in Indonesia

2. METHODOLOGY

This research used a descriptive qualitative design. The method was chosen because the researchers wanted to describe the situations scientifically. Using this method, the phenomenon would be portrayed, summarized, and represented in a deep understanding (Barnes, 2017; Yin, 2011). The data was gained from semi-structured interviews with twelve participants. The interviews were conducted offline and online as well. The offline system of the interview was done by having recorded conversations with the participants while the online ones were conducted through an online system and recorded. The online system was zoom meeting. The conversation was also not only done through video calls but also through chatting using Whatsapp as the media. The participants were three female students as well as male students and three female teachers as well as male teachers. This research was conducted in Islamic Junior High School of Amanatul Ummah. The students studied and stayed there days and nights since it was an Islamic Boarding School. The data gained from the interviews were then coded and given themes using a qualitative method to build a corpus of this research.

3. FINDINGS

Pros and cons related to the rules of novels' existence at Junior High School of Amanatul Ummah were because there was no clear rule whether novels should be banned or allowed at the school. This caused some teachers who believed that the existence of novels could provide advantages for the students allowed and promoted novels for the students while those who believed that novels could provide disadvantages for the students tried to ban the students' novels when they brought and read in certain moments.

3.1 Pros

Novels should be allowed for the students to bring and read since it made the students felt happy and it was a good choice when the students had leisure time. Misal (14 years old): "*I liked reading novels because it made me feel happy and I prefer reading novels rather than any other activities in my leisure time*". Reading novels gave inspiration to the students in real life, especially motivational novels. The students had a requirement to memorize the holy Qur'an and it was not easy and needed great effort. The students were inspired by one of the novels they read. The inspiration was about the struggle in memorizing the Holy Quran. By reading novels, the students could write a story better and it increased their vocabulary. Axel (14 years old): "*once I felt difficult to memorize holy Qur'an but then after reading a novel entitled 5 Menara, I realized that I should not surrender before trying. It made me continued my struggle to memorize the holy Qur'an. Reading novels also improved my writing skill and I got lots of vocabulary that were beneficial for me*".

Living in a boarding school with lots of activities was not easy. The system of boarding schools that banned almost all digital devices for the students made it boring. The students' activities were boring. Novels were one of the solutions the students could get as a refreshment. Gilang (14 years old): "*I read novels for my pleasure. It was boring living with full activities and by reading novels, I could get entertained*".

3.1 Cons

Novels at boarding schools gave negative impacts on the students. The students who were curious about the story in the novels could stay up for a night just to read the novels as the solution for their curiosity. Ella (15 years old): "*I felt very curious about the story of a novel and it made me stayed up for a night just to finish the novel and as the consequence, I could not wake up on time for a night prayer and school*". Reading novels made the students focused too much on the novels and made them lower at school performance. It made the students felt lazy to learn school subjects since the students focused too much on reading the

novels. Azka (14years old) "*I felt my school performance got lower because I focused my time on reading novels too much*".

Novels were not filtered in terms of kinds. There might be students who brought novels containing pornography and they kept it illegally in their locker. This condition also caused some teachers to have a bad working relationship since some teachers promoted novels while some others seized the novels from the students. Mr. Cecep (32 years old): "*The unclear policy related to the existence of novels at school made different beliefs of several teachers. That made some teachers had an unwell relationship in a working place*".

3.1 Suggestions

School should provide specific time or days to read novels for example on Saturday and Sunday but for other days, novels should be banned to prevent disruptions on the school subjects. The availability of the school library should be considered. By providing a school library, the students would read novels at the appropriate time and of course, it would not disrupt school subjects that became the learning priority. Ella (14 years old): "*I know that novels gave me a negative effect. But it also gave me positive ones. Therefore, I hoped the rules about the novel should be clear. For example, novels are only fine to read-only on Saturday and Sunday and school should provide a library for the students to read novels appropriately*".

Related to the unclear policy about novels, the school should make it clear whether it was allowed, banned, or allowed with specific conditions. There should be a meeting about the policy to share with the students later. Mr. Cecep (32 years old): "*School should have a meeting to discuss the novel as a topic. If it was allowed, there should be informed to the students about the allowed novels to read. Not all novels are allowed. The school should filter them first. By doing so, the different opinions the teachers had should not be problems anymore because the policy was clear*".

The policy related to novels at school made the teachers dilemma since it was not clear enough for the teachers as well as the students. The disadvantages of novel existence at school made some teachers believed that novels should be banned while the advantages of novels made some other teachers believed that novels should be allowed. There were pros and cons related to novels caused by the unclear policy at school.

4. DISCUSSION

Reading novels was enjoyable and made the students felt happy. By reading novels, the students will feel happy since there was no pressure in reading the novels. It will be different from reading books that become subjects of the learning activities. By doing reading for pleasure, the students will improve their comprehension skills and positively affected the students' language acquisition (Goctu, 2016). Therefore, reading novels can be a good activity for the students.

Reading novels trained the students' writing skills. By reading novels, the students will be able to develop writing skills from experience through inspiration from the novels they have read. The story of the novels can be an inspiration for the students implied in their real life. Reading novels for pleasure can improve the students' writing skills by expanding their vocabulary and improve their grammatical features (Attiyat, 2019). Reading novels is a beneficial activity for the students.

Living in a boarding school can be very stressful. The activities are quite the same day by day. Moreover, digital devices were banned due to the boarding school policy, and of course, it made the students feel more stressed. Reading novels can be entertainment for the students. By reading novels, the students can decrease their stress and keep their mental health that will be beneficial for their living (Rizzolo et al., 2011). Therefore, it is good to consider reading novels to keep the students' mental health.

Interest in reading novels can trigger students to sleep late every night. They tend to finish reading novels because of the curiosity they feel from reading the novels. This condition created sleep problems for the students. In the system in boarding school, the students are required to get up early in the morning for a certain prayer. By reading novels, the students will experience sleep problems and insomnia is one of the problems. The problems will affect the students' achievements in the academic setting (Stormark et al., 2019; Vedaa et al., 2019). Therefore, the policy related to novels at school should be discussed for a good solution.

Reading novels for pleasure makes the students enjoy the activity. The students tend to choose reading novels rather than reading school subjects. Reading school subjects tends to be considered a burden because they need to read it in focus and may require memorizing some difficult formula. This made the students spend more time reading novels than school subject books that affect the students' interest in school subjects because novels are

considered as easier books to read and comprehend (Muliati, 2017). This time, reading novels caused problems related to book preference for reading.

The unclear policy related to novels caused different opinions among teachers and students. It caused pros and cons whether novels should be allowed, allowed with conditions, or banned. The unclear policy impacted the teachers and students experienced a negative relationship regarding the policy. The negative relationship needed managers to overcome the problems. Another problem was about the content of the novels. Since there was no filter on the kinds of novels, some novels that existed might contain inappropriate content for the students. For example, a novel that the story targets eighteen plus age level readers. When this kind of novel was read by the Junior High School students, it would impact negatively on the risky sexual behavior, addiction, and expectation (Setyawati et al., 2020; Yunengsih & Setiawan, 2021). Therefore, the policy related to novels should be taken seriously.

Problems regarding the school policy about novels should be considered to be taken. Realizing the positive and negative impacts of novels on students and teachers, the school should hold a meeting to discuss the policy. Providing a specific time and place for reading novels can be a solution for everyone. For example, the existence of a school library will positively motivate the students to gain valuable information and take maximum benefits from the facilities (Rodrigues & Mandrekar, 2019). The next is selecting the novels allowed for the students to read. By creating the policy, the students will have appropriate time and place to read novels, and the negative relationships among teachers and students will not stay any longer and potentially change into a positive relationship. Good relationships among teachers and students will create a better atmosphere that positively impacts the school system's quality and wellbeing. Therefore, the solutions need consideration to be implemented.

5. CONCLUSION

School policy related to novels at school was still considerable. The unclear school policy created several problems among students and teachers. Novels bring positive impacts on students in terms of language development and emotion. However, the existence of novels also brings negative impacts in terms of the negative working relationship, students' achievements, motivation, and forbidden actions. Several recommendations related to the school policy should become a consideration to be implemented. The recommendations were in terms of school meetings, discussion, time, and place management. The school should hold a meeting to discuss the school policy. The school also should consider providing a school library and manage time for the students to access and make use of the facilities.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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