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SEWANG SONG AS A MEDIUM FOR TEACHING PRE-READING SKILLS TO ORANG ASLI PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify and map past studies related to the use of Sewang songs as a medium for teaching pre-reading skills to Orang Asli preschool children, as well as to identify the challenges faced by teachers in the context of teaching pre-reading skills to preschool children. This study uses a scoping review method based on the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework and the PRISMA-ScR guidelines for the article search and selection process. A total of 25 articles were selected from various databases through a systematic search strategy using predetermined keywords. The study findings were analyzed and mapped to three main themes: (i) the role and advantages of songs in teaching pre-reading, (ii) the use of traditional songs in early education, (iii) teachers' challenges in teaching early literacy. The findings show that the Sewang song-based approach not only improves syllable and vocabulary mastery in pre-reading skills, but also fosters preschool students' motivation and engagement in learning. However, preschool teachers face various challenges such as language differences, culturally based teaching materials constraints, as well as socioeconomic factors and challenging geographical locations. This study contributes to strengthening the discourse of literacy education in the context of the Orang Asli community and future studies suggest a study on the development of learning modules based on contextual traditional songs of the Orang Asli community as well as the implementation of more comprehensive teacher training. The integration of cultural elements such as the Sewang song is not only able to enhance academic achievement, but is also able to continuously preserve the identity and heritage of the Orang Asli community.

Introduction

Quality education under SDG4 (United Nations, 2024) is important to ensure that every child, including the Orang Asli community, has access to relevant education without leaving anyone behind in the sustainable development agenda of the country. Children in the interior, especially the Orang Asli community, experience the same problems in mastering reading skills. Every child from minority communities and Orang Asli has the right to enjoy education in their own culture and practice their own language and religion (Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, 1995).

Pre-reading skills are an important foundation for preschool children's literacy before mastering reading skills. However, Orang Asli preschool children face challenges and issues such as difficulty in recognizing letters, syllables and reading words due to the lack of modules, approaches and teaching materials that are appropriate for the Orang Asli culture (Ali, 2022). Reading skills are important for obtaining information, expanding knowledge and improving communication. However, the Malaysian education system is still weak in addressing the issue of reading incompetence among Orang Asli students, which is found to be far below the national average (Letchamanan et al., 2021).

Figure 1: Photos Of The Author With Indigenous Children In Teaching Pre-Reading Skill Using Sewang Song At At One Of The Indigenous Schools In Kuala Lipis, Pahang.

Another issue, Abdul Samat (2022) stated that there is a high dropout rate, low academic achievement, and disengagement in school in Orang Asli education in Malaysia. Students are able to understand the importance of their learning, in daily life, and gain a deeper understanding of learning (Shuhidan et al., 2024). There is increasing interest in the implementation of Orang Asli Pedagogy that integrates students' cultural background, language, and traditional practices into the educational curriculum (Greenall & Bailey, 2022). In line with this, a study by Letchamanan et al., (2021) stated that language learning among Orang Asli children should be centered on their own cultural context. Recognition of the Orang Asli community in language education is important to build effective meaning and support educational efforts (Idrus et al., 2023).

The Orang Asli have an oral tradition rich in elements of music, folklore, and performing arts. Among the cultural heritage that is still practiced is Sewang, which is a form of traditional singing and dancing that is played in certain ceremonies such as medicine, celebrations, or customs of paying homage to ancestral spirits and requesting well-being. Sewang songs are traditional music played by the Orang Asli community in Malaysia, especially by the Semai and Temiar tribes (Mohd Mokhtar et al., 2023). A study by Chan & Saidon, (2021) found that traditional Semai songs reflect the creativity and musical skills of the Semai community, and also stimulate the interest of young people to develop traditional works through direct involvement and improvisation. Sewang songs also have the potential to support the reading learning process not only in the classroom, but also in the home environment through a more interactive and cultural approach (Noor Hanim Harun et al., 2020).

Previous studies have shown that songs can improve students' phonemic awareness, vocabulary, memory and concentration because music in education promotes active learning because teachers integrate musical activities to maximize children's effective learning potential (Aziz & Masnan, 2022). However, there is still a lack of research that examines these traditional Orang Asli songs that can be systematically applied in early childhood education. This opens up space for research needs for researchers to explore the use of Sewang songs as a medium for pre-reading teaching to Orang Asli preschool children. Therefore, this article aims to explore the use of Sewang songs as a medium for teaching pre-reading skills to Orang Asli preschool children and review relevant past studies.

This study provides an opportunity for preschool teachers and parents to adapt local culture-based learning in the context of early childhood education at home and school. In addition to contributing to educational progress, the approach in this study also strengthens the preservation of Orang Asli cultural and ethnic values in the face of modernization trends that integrate cultural elements, especially the Sewang song, to improve the pre-reading skills of Orang Asli preschool children.

Research Objectives

1. To identify and map past studies related to the role of Sewang songs in teaching pre-reading skills to preschool children.

2. To identify gaps in the literature related to the challenges faced by teachers in teaching pre-reading at the early childhood education level.

Research Questions

1. What do past studies reveal about the role of Sewang songs in teaching pre-reading skills to preschool children?

2. What are the challenges identified in previous studies regarding the teaching of pre-reading by early childhood education teachers?

Research Methodology
This study uses a scoping review approach to explore and map past studies related to the role of Sewang songs in teaching pre-reading skills to preschool children as well as teachers'

challenges in teaching early literacy to children. This approach was chosen because it allows for a broad exploration of diverse literature without the limitations of the study design.

The scoping review approach in this study is guided by the model proposed by Arksey & O'Malley (2005), which consists of five main steps: (i) identifying research questions; (ii) identifying relevant studies; (iii) selecting studies; (iv) mapping and extracting data; and (v) organizing, reporting and summarizing results. This model allows researchers to explore research areas broadly and systematically, especially in topics that have not yet been widely explored such as the integration of traditional cultural elements in early literacy teaching. This approach is also suitable for identifying literature gaps, formulating main themes in existing studies, and suggesting directions for future research without having to conduct a critical assessment of the quality of each study reviewed.

This review framework is based on the model proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) which consists of five main steps, namely:

i. Determining the research question
ii. Identifying relevant studies
iii. Study selection
iv. Data extraction and mapping
v. Summary and reporting of results

This study reporting guideline is also strengthened by using the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) framework.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Articles were considered eligible for inclusion if they discussed studies examining the use of songs or music in early childhood education, related to pre-reading or early literacy skills, studies involving Orang Asli or indigenous communities. Articles were included if the author studied or commented on discussing teacher challenges in early childhood education.

All types of articles were included, including dissertations, conference abstracts and opinion pieces, except for systematic or scoping reviews, books or book chapters. All articles published from 2020 to 2025 were included given the rapid development of social media which was limited before 2000. Articles could be published in Malay or English, for the publication period from 2020 to 2025. Articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Articles were excluded if they were written in a language other than Malay or English or if they focused on music that was only used for entertainment, not learning. Systematic reviews, scoping reviews, books and book chapters were excluded. Articles were excluded if they did not involve early childhood education or preschool. Articles were also excluded if the Article was not available in full text form.

Databases & search strategies

A systematic literature search was conducted in five major databases. A combination of Boolean operators (AND, OR) was used in the search of the major databases to obtain search results relevant to the research topic. This search strategy was also adapted according to the needs of the specific database as follows: -

i. Scopus
ii. Web of Science (WoS)
iii. ERIC (Education Resources Information Center)
iv. Google Scholar
v. MyJurnal

It is indeed important to use multiple keywords and databases to avoid retrieval bias (Durach et al., 2017).

Table 1: Data Search Strategy

Database	Search string
Scopus	Title - ABS - KEY "pre-reading skills" OR "early literacy" AND "preschool" OR "early childhood education" AND "song" OR "music" OR "traditional song" OR "Indigenous song" OR "Sewang" AND "Orang Asli" OR "Indigenous children" OR "Aboriginal" AND "teaching challenges" OR "literacy teaching"
Web of Science (WoS)	TOPIC: ("pre-reading skills" OR "early literacy") AND ("preschool" OR "early childhood education") AND ("song" OR "music" OR "traditional song" OR "Indigenous song" OR "Sewang") AND ("Orang Asli" OR "Indigenous children") AND ("teaching challenges" OR "literacy teaching")
ERIC (Education Resources Information Center)	("pre-reading skills" OR "early literacy") AND ("preschool" OR "early childhood education") AND ("song" OR "music" OR "traditional song" OR "Indigenous song" OR "Sewang") AND ("Orang Asli" OR "Indigenous children") AND ("teaching challenges" OR "literacy teaching")
Google Scholar	"pre-reading skills" AND "Sewang" AND "Orang Asli" AND "preschool" AND "teaching"
MyJurnal	"pra membaca" OR "literasi awal" AND "lagu" OR "muzik" AND "Orang Asli"

Article Selection Process
The first step involved an initial screening based on titles and abstracts to identify articles relevant to the study objectives. Articles that did not meet the focus of the study, such as those involving secondary education contexts, the use of music for entertainment only, or those that did not involve preschool children, were excluded.

Next, articles that passed the initial screening were read in full to ensure their suitability based on topic, target group, and focus on teaching pre-reading skills and cultural elements such as traditional songs. This process was visually documented using a PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) flow chart that shows the number of articles found, screened, rejected, and selected for thematic analysis.

Based on the initial search, a total of 180 articles were identified across five databases. At the title and abstract screening stage, 45 articles continued to the full reading stage. Of these, 25 articles were selected for analysis in this review.
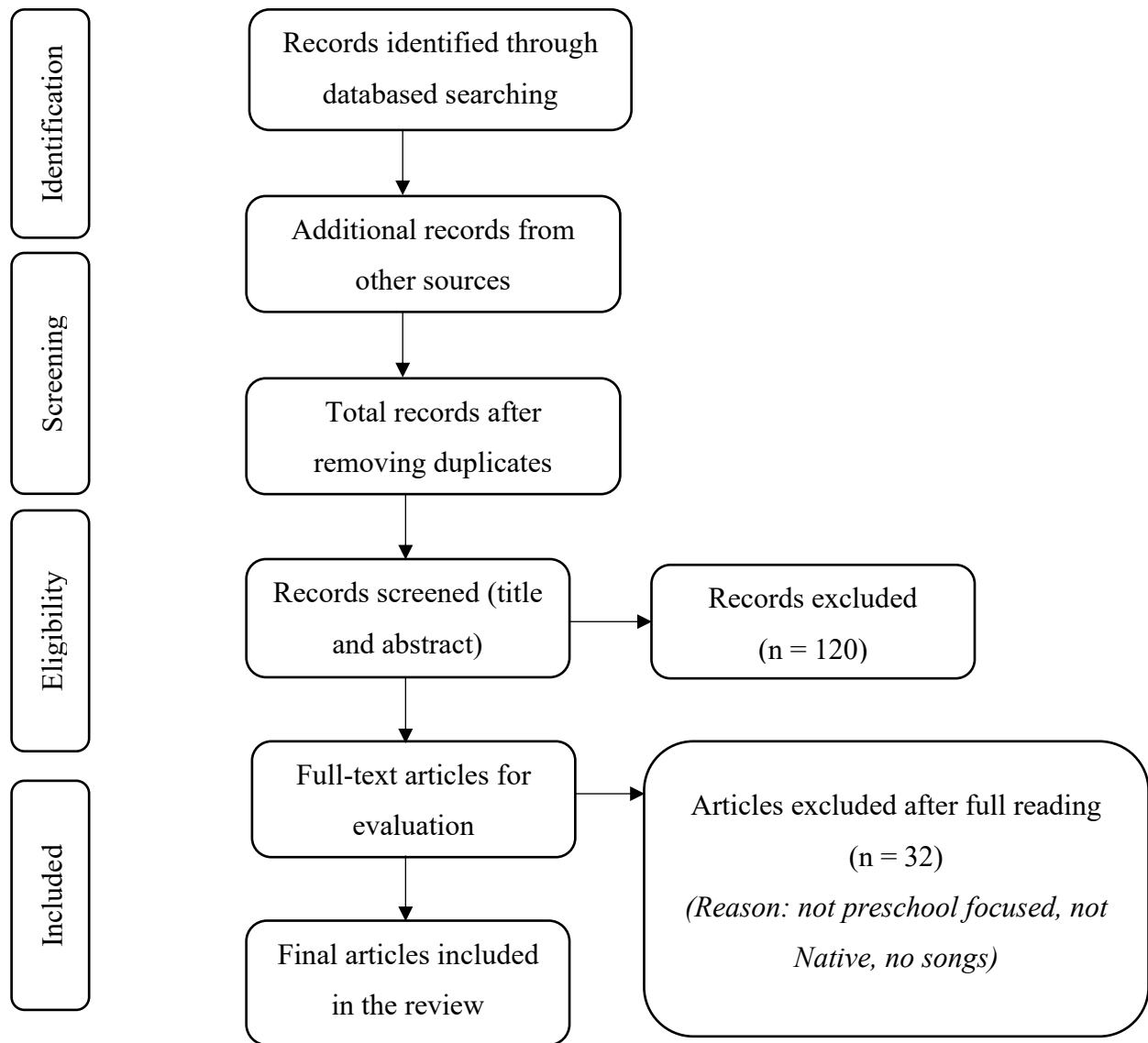
PRISMA Chart

Figure 2: Systematic Searching Strategies Of The Scoping Review

Summary And Reporting Of Results

Table 2: Summary And Reporting The Results

No	Author (Tahun)	Research Tittle	Research Design	Research Target	Finding	Focus (Sewang Song / Teacher Challenge)
1	Clare Suet Ching Chan & Zaharul Lailiddin Saidon, (2021)	Advocating Contemporary Traditional Indigenous Semai	Qualitative Research (cultural analysis)	Semai Indigenous People	Traditional songs and practices play a role in building identity and educational values	Traditional songs / Indigenous culture
2	Abdul Halim Masnan, Seah Siok Peh, Azila Alias (2021)	A Digital Application For Education And Entertainment For 3M Primary School Indigenous Students	Qualitative research with experimental approach	Orang Asli Year 5 students	Significant improvement in literacy and numeracy after using the 3M learning kit, showing increased engagement.	Song used for interactive learning.
3	Letchamanan, Nur Surayyah Madhubala Abdullah (2021)	Language Education for Orang Asli Children in Malaysia	Qualitative Research	Orang Asli Children	Challenges in teaching literacy related to language differences and cultural contexts	Teacher/native language challenges
4	Catherine Hamilton, Johannes Schulz (2024)	Investigating the Substantive Linguistic Effects of Using Songs	Experimental Study	Elementary school students	The use of songs improves phonetic skills and vocabulary mastery.	The impact of songs on early literacy
5	Issahaku,Tham-Agyekum1, E. Taylor 1 and F. Ankuyi (2024)	Exploring Indigenous Communication Strategies for Championing Development Initiatives	Narrative/Conceptual Studies	Orang Asli Community	Cultural communication is important for understanding development; songs and rituals play a social role	Culture / communication / educational engagement
6	Thomas Fienberg, (2023)	Music, literature, and community: Reflections on a framework for learning through and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music	Theoretical Study	ATSI student community (Australia)	Traditional music strengthens community ties and deepens understanding in learning	Community cultural / pedagogical songs

7	Arla Good, Lori Sims, Keith Clarke, Frank A. Russo (2021)	Indigenous youth reconnect with cultural identity: The evaluation of a community- and school-based traditional music program	Qualitative Research	Indigenous youth	Ethnic songs strengthen identity, interest in learning increases when cultural music is used	Music culture / identity / learning motivation
8	Anita Prest, J. Scott Goble, Hector Vazquez-Cordoba & Beth Tuinstra, (2021)	Enacting curriculum 'in a good way:' Indigenous knowledge, pedagogy, and worldviews in British Columbia music education classes	Ethnographic Studies	High school music class (BC, Canada)	Indigenous musical practices are integrated into the curriculum holistically and respectfully with cultural contexts	Curriculum based on indigenous music culture/practices
9	Peter Obeng, John Brewu, Edward Opoku (2022)	Use of Indigenous and Folk-Game Songs for Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood Education Setting	Action Research	Preschool Children (rural)	Folk songs help with phonics and student engagement in pre-reading classes	Traditional songs / early literacy / creative pedagogy
10	Henni Rosa Triwardani, (2022)	Building Vocabulary Through Song as Effective Method in Learning English	Quasi-Experimental	Elementary school students (Indonesia)	The use of songs effectively improves English vocabulary mastery	Songs & vocabulary mastery
11	Jenny Diouf Lewis, and Soo Ji Kim (2024)	Scoping Review of Music Interventions Aimed at Improving Reading Skills in Children with Specific Learning Disorders in Reading	Scoping Review	Children 6–14 years old with dyslexia	Music intervention helps phonological processes & reading comprehension	Music intervention/pre-reading support
12	Lorraine Beveridge, (2024)	The Early Reading and Music Partnership	Qualitative Research	Early school children	Combining music and literacy accelerates early reading skills	A combination of music & early reading

13	Shamila Mohamed Shuhidan (2024)	Assessing Educational Approaches to Incorporate Indigenous Knowledge in Enhancing Learning Motivation among Malaysian Indigenous Students	Qualitative Research	Malaysian Indigenous Students	Integration of indigenous knowledge increases learning motivation	Culture / inclusive teaching / teacher challenges
14	Saliza Sahli & Norfaizah Abdul Jobar, (2024)	Attitudes and Interests of Orang Asli Students towards Learning Proverbs: Application of the Jungle Module	Quantitative (correlation)	Indigenous students (lower secondary)	Interest is higher than attitude towards learning using modules	Interest/attitude in language learning
15	Nor Azwahanum Nor Shaid, Shahidi A. Hamid, Marlyna Maros, (2022)	Exploring the Second Language Proficiency of Temiar Orang Asli Students: An Ethnographic Case Study	Ethnographic Research Case Studies	Orang Asli secondary school students in Temiar	Challenges in mastering BM due to an unconducive social & cultural environment	Teacher challenges / BM proficiency
16	Aidil Fitri Sawalludin (2020)	The Struggle of Orang Asli in Education: Quality of Education	Case Study	Indigenous Community (general)	Factors such as poverty, difficult access & culture cause low educational attainment	Teacher challenges / quality of education
17	Mohd Mahzan Awang (2022)	School Absence: Causative Factors, Activities During Truancy and Cultural Aspirations of Indigenous Students	Case Study (Interview)	Semelai Orang Asli Students	Truancy factors: student, parent, peer & culture attitudes. More practical learning aspirations	Teacher challenges / learning culture
18	Abdul Halim Abdullah, (2022)	A Systematic Review of What Malaysia Can Learn to Improve Orang Asli Students' Mathematics	Systematic Literature Review	Indigenous Students (International & Malaysian)	Interventions from abroad are relevant if cultural contextualization is taken into account	SLR / International Aboriginal education

		Learning fromOther Countries				
19	Muhammad Syazwan Faiz Shahrom, 2024)	Analysis of the Needs for the Construction of a Fiqh Munakahat Model for the Orang Asli Muslim Community	Qualitative Research (interviews)	Orang Asli Muslim Community (Perak)	Social & cultural issues in marriage such as guardianship & dowry require a contextual approach	Cultural issues/value education
20	Jannah Kamaruddin et al., (2024).	Kepentingan Lagu-Lagu Rakyat Dalam Pendidikan Prasekolah	Literature Review	Preschool teachers & children (theoretical)	Folk songs support identity building, cultural understanding & joyful learning.	Sewang Song
21	James Isabirye, (2021)	Can indigenous music learning processes inform contemporary schooling?	Autoethnography	Ethnic communities & music students in Uganda	Indigenous pedagogy enhances ownership, identity & student agency. Learning becomes meaningful and collaborative.	Sewang Song (similar concept)
22	Lialoura Long Roslee (2021)	Membina Modul Mudah Membaca MOA Bagi Meningkatkan Kemahiran Membaca Murid Orang Asli	Quasi-experimental & Qualitative	30 Orang Asli pupils	MOA module improved reading skills and behavior. Treatment > Control. (SK Ulu Geruntum, SK Senta, SK Batu 14)	Teacher Challenge
23	Norhanim Abdul Samat et al. (2022)	A Case Study of Drama Education for Indigenous Children in The Alternative Classroom	Case Study (Qualitative)	Orang Asli children in Johor	Drama enhanced non-verbal communication, social skills & learning motivation.	Teacher Challenge
24	Nurul Aida Aziz & Abdul Halim Masnan (2022)	The Use of Children's Songs in Developing Malay Language Skills in Private Kindergartens	Qualitative (Case Study, Interviews)	3 early childhood education teachers in	Children's songs enhance vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and engagement in language learning. Teachers acknowledged songs as	Sewang Song

					effective tools in classroom delivery and language development.	
25	Badli Esham Ahmad et,.al (2022)	Being successful in school: A case study of the Orang Asli (Aboriginal People) of Malaysia	Qualitative (Exploratory, Semi-Structured Interviews)	private kindergartens 3 Orang Asli students from Jahut and Semelai tribes pursuing bachelor's degrees	Success influenced by strong personal motivation and supportive environment (parental involvement, community, infrastructure). Demonstrates the importance of culturally responsive support systems.	Teacher Challenge

Study Findings

Advantages Of Using Songs As A Medium In Learning Pre-Reading
Preschool children need to go through pre-reading activities that stimulate visual and auditory acuity before learning to read. Next, they are taught mechanical reading such as sounding out letters, syllables and words using various methods and aids. The final stage involves reading with comprehension, where the teacher plays a role in enriching students' vocabulary to help them relate reading to existing experiences and knowledge.

Previous studies have shown that the use of songs can improve pre-reading skills among preschool children. Songs not only help in the aspect of phonetic and vocabulary mastery, but also stimulate students' focus, motivation and involvement in the learning process. A study by Hamilton et al., (2024) showed that the approach of using songs successfully improved phonetic skills and vocabulary mastery among primary school students. Preschool children need to master early literacy skills such as language and communication, print concepts, phonemics, narrative reading and comprehension, and early writing (Hussin et al., 2022). Furthermore, Lorraine Beveridge, (2024) found that the combination of musical elements in early reading activities accelerates the process of understanding and sound recognition. Musical interventions are also reported to be able to help students with special needs such as dyslexia to improve phonological processing and reading comprehension (Lewis & Kim, 2024).

This study aims to explore the advantages of using and adapting, Sewang songs which are a culture and tradition of the Orang Asli community in the education of preschool children to help them master pre-reading skills and interact and communicate more effectively. According to a study by Chan & Saidon, (2021) Sewang songs play the most important role in helping children learn to read which is not only limited to activities in the classroom and at home because it can stimulate young people's interest in through suitability, involvement, and connection with interests through live musical interaction, improvisation. In addition, a study by Abdul Halim Masnan, Seah Siok Peh and Azila Alias, (2021) shows that the findings indicate that fun learning activities including creativity, singing, and games played a key role in engaging students and enhancing their 3M (reading, writing, counting) skills.

According to Letchamanan et al., (2021) study emphasized that language learning needs to be contextualized in the environment of Orang Asli children with due recognition of their communities to support effective meaning-making and efforts to strengthen education that is based on their own identity and culture. In a study by Hamilton et al., (2024) stated that the use of traditional songs in the classroom has a positive impact on vocabulary acquisition, grammar learning, and speaking, listening, reading and writing skills for children aged 2-6 years.

In addition, a study by Issahaku et al., (2024) stated that Orang Asli folk songs can celebrate cultural identity, preserve historical events and convey important messages about social issues and the transformative potential of Orang Asli communication in promoting inclusive development and fostering community cohesion. For the Orang Asli community in Australia, the approach of Orang Asli music in the classroom brings transformative experiences and ongoing beneficial relationships (Thomas Fienberg, 2023). Furthermore, community-based and school-based traditional music positively impacts the personal, cultural, social

development and engagement of Orang Asli youth, while maintaining cultural knowledge (Arla Good et al., 2021)

The Use of Traditional Songs in Early Childhood Education

Traditional songs such as indigenous ethnic folk songs play an important role in building identity and conveying cultural values to children. A study by Prest et al., (2021) emphasized that musical elements in the culture of the Semai Orang Asli community play a role in value education and identity empowerment. This is in line with the findings of Arla Good et al., (2021) which showed that ethnic music among ATSI students in Australia can improve learning comprehension and strengthen community relationships.

Traditional songs are songs that are rooted in local culture and are passed down orally from generation to generation based on themes that are closely related to the environment and daily life of the community Kamaruddin et al., (2024). Angelo et al., (2022) also emphasized that cultural music increases learning motivation and emotional involvement of indigenous students. In the context of Orang Asli Islamic education, Syazwan & Shahrom, (2024) emphasized the need for an approach that respects cultural norms so that the educational process is more contextual and effective.

Incorporating local Indigenous knowledge into music education through singing and drumming can foster cross-cultural understanding and respect (Prest et al., 2021). Indigenous songs and folk games in early childhood education settings promote cultural education and holistic development of children, make conceptual learning easier and promote multiple intelligences (Peter Obeng, John Brewu, 2022). Indigenous pedagogy incorporated into pre-reading education through Sewang songs can foster interest, active engagement, ownership of learning and identity of Indigenous preschool children, thus creating a fun, meaningful and contextual learning experience in line with their culture (Isabirye, 2021).

This is supported by Henni Rosa Triwardani, (2022) who demonstrated the effectiveness of songs in building English vocabulary through a song-based teaching approach. In the preschool context, Furthermore, Beveridge, (2024) found that the combination of musical elements in early reading activities accelerates the process of comprehension and sound recognition. Music interventions have also been reported to help students with special needs such as dyslexia to improve phonological processing and reading comprehension (Lewis & Kim, 2024).

Using traditional songs as a teaching method significantly improved vocabulary learning compared to traditional methods Henni Rosa Triwardani, (2022). Song and music interventions can improve reading skills in children, but more research is needed to clarify the effectiveness of these interventions on reading accuracy, comprehension and fluency (Lewis & Kim, 2024). Teaching music can improve early reading skills by strengthening auditory processing, phonemes and letters, guided learning, and aiding memory (Beveridge, 2024).

The Challenges Faced By Preschool Teachers in Teaching Pre-reading

The literacy level among Orang Asli students is much lower than the national average, which requires that the language learning process be placed in the context of their own culture (Letchamanan et al., 2021). A study by Shuhidan et al., (2024) found that appropriate pedagogical approaches, cultural compatibility in teaching, and access to learning materials are important factors in improving literacy. The biggest challenge for teachers is the difference in

spoken language at home, where the Orang Asli mother tongue is used instead of Malay. This makes it difficult for students to understand the content of the lesson and makes it difficult for teachers to explain the content Saliza Sahli & Norfaizah Abdul Jobar, (2024); Nor Azwahanum Nor Shaid, Shahidi A. Hamid, Marlyna Maros, (2022). The acceptance of a second language depends on the attitude, interest and motivation of the students (Saliza Sahli & Norfaizah Abdul Jobar, 2024). However, the Orang Asli community fears that high proficiency in BM will erode their tribal identity (Nor Azwahanum Nor Shaid, Shahidi A. Hamid, Marlyna Maros, 2022).

Among the main challenges are the lack of culturally based teaching materials, constraints in contextual pedagogy, and lack of specific training (Lialoura Long Roslee et al., 2021). Furthermore, Shuhidan et al., (2024) stated that the lack of integration of indigenous knowledge in the curriculum is a major constraint on the effectiveness of teaching.

Socioeconomic factors also contribute significantly. Poverty and remote school locations make access to quality education difficult, in addition to causing student absenteeism Aidil Fitri Sawalludin et al., (2020) ; Mahzan Awang et al., (2022). Other studies show that parental laxity, peer pressure, and cultural influences that place more emphasis on family economic activities such as hunting and gathering forest products contribute to dropout (Nor Azwahanum Nor Shaid, Shahidi A. Hamid, 2022). Community attitudes also influence the effectiveness of early literacy education. Emphasizing that poverty and limited access contribute to educational achievement gaps. The issue of school absenteeism examined by Mahzan Awang et al., (2022) also shows how community culture affects students' attitudes towards learning. This makes it difficult for teachers to implement consistent and high-impact literacy strategies.

Several studies have also linked students' attitudes and motivation towards learning as critical factors in mastering the Malay language, but efforts to increase this motivation are often hampered by cultural perceptions and closed-minded attitudes of the community (Saliza Sahli & Norfaizah Abdul Jobar, 2024). Another challenge faced by teachers is students who have never attended preschool education. causing them to have difficulty understanding lessons, especially in mastering language skills, so students cannot be exposed to building the foundation of literacy skills (Nazariyah Sanazarini, 2014).

In addition, environmental factors such as unconducive learning spaces, lack of basic facilities, and lack of transportation are also major challenges Awang et al., (2022) ; Ahmad et al., (2022). This affects the cognitive development and language ability of Orang Asli children. In fact, teachers also face challenges in implementing the curriculum effectively due to time constraints, lack of training, and lack of technological support and teaching aids (Mohamad Muar et al., 2024). According to Mahzan Awang et al., (2022) and a study by Abdullah (2022), it was found that Orang Asli children face difficulties in understanding because the children are not yet proficient in the Malay language and use their mother tongue.

Studies such as those by Syazwan & Shahrom, (2024) and the 2022 Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia 2022 (SUHAKAM, 2024) emphasize that geographical isolation, community perception, and lack of access to infrastructure continue to complicate the implementation of comprehensive education, causing many Orang Asli children to show poor academic performance and lack of engagement in school. However, the study by Ahmad et al., (2022) shows that community support, JAKOA and the availability of

transportation are among the important elements to assist educational efforts, although still limited by poverty and cultural isolation.

Their lives are closely linked to the forest as the main source of livelihood to help their parents hunt, farm and gather forest products and catch fish, causing many students to skip school (Nor Azwahanum Nor Shaid, Shahidi A. Hamid, 2022). As a result, they fall behind in learning and eventually drop out. This is evidenced by the year 2020 Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KKDW) Report showing that 2,450 Orang Asli students dropped out of primary school without completing grade 6, and this number increased to 3,190 in 2021. A study by Mahzan Awang et al., (2022) found that the four main factors behind their non-attendance at school were children's attitudes, peer influence, social ecological pull, and parental laxity. The Orang Asli community, which still adheres to traditional customs and beliefs, believes that modern education can threaten their culture, thus becoming a barrier to the younger generation from pursuing knowledge.

A study by Sawalludin et al., (2020) the lack of proper infrastructure is a challenge for settlement and an obstacle to improving the quality of education for Orang Asli children, limited road access, delayed delivery of educational resources such as textbooks and teaching materials cause delays in learning progress. Teachers also face challenges in explaining concepts to Orang Asli children in an easy-to-understand manner Mahzan Awang et al., (2022). A study by Abdul Samat et al., (2022), showed that this strategy has several advantages, including increased communication, engagement, and innovation. However, there are obstacles such as the lack of formal teacher training in the context of indigenous communities and the difficulty in maintaining children's attention due to limited exposure to a traditional classroom setting.

The results of the literature mapping found that although there are many studies related to the use of music and songs in early education Aziz & Masnan, (2022), there are still few studies that focus on the Sewang song, especially in pre-reading teaching. Most previous studies have focused more on general teaching approaches or game and singing methods as in Masnan,Peh & Alias, (2021) study and have not explored the potential of traditional Orang Asli songs such as Sewang in the context of preschool children's literacy.

The challenges faced by preschool teachers in teaching pre-reading skills are influenced by language barriers, cultural differences, and socio-economic factors. Children's use of their native language at home makes it difficult for them to understand lessons in Malay. The lack of culturally appropriate teaching materials and insufficient teacher training also hinder effective literacy instruction. Socioeconomic issues, such as poverty and isolation, limit access to resources and contribute to absenteeism. Additionally, cultural attitudes towards education and the fear of losing tribal identity further complicate the learning process. These challenges highlight the need for culturally relevant teaching methods and better support for teachers to improve literacy outcomes for marginalized communities.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study based on the stated objectives of the study. The findings show that the use of songs and chants, especially those based on culture such as the Sewang song, has a positive impact on teaching pre-reading to Orang Asli preschool children. In addition, the findings also reveal significant challenges faced by teachers in delivering early

literacy teaching in the context of indigenous communities. This discussion relates the findings to existing literature, theories of literacy teaching, and the reality of Orang Asli community education.

Firstly, the use of songs as a teaching medium has been proven to support the development of pre-reading skills through phonetic activities, repetition, and melodies that aid memory. Studies such as those by Mohd Mokhtar et al., (2023) and Norazlina Triwardani, (2022) support this finding, where songs help students recognize syllables and increase vocabulary. This finding is in line with the theory of early music learning which emphasizes the role of rhythm in children's language development. Furthermore, songs also increase students' focus and engagement, making the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. This reinforces the need to integrate music into preschool pedagogical approaches, especially among minority students such as Orang Asli who may have difficulty with conventional methods.

Second, the Sewang song, as one of the cultural heritages of the Orang Asli community, is not only relevant in the context of entertainment and rituals, but also has potential as a pedagogical tool. Anita Prest et al., (2021) study shows that learning based on cultural music helps strengthen identity and improve academic understanding. In the Malaysian context, a culture-based approach can help students understand the content of the lesson better because it is related to their life experiences. Sewang, when used in pre-reading activities, can be a medium to construct meaning that is close to their lives. This is important to build an inclusive learning environment and respect the background of students.

Third, although the use of local music and culture promises effectiveness in pre-reading teaching, preschool teachers face various major challenges. Language challenges, lack of teaching materials, training constraints, as well as socioeconomic and geographical factors are among the main constraints in achieving effective teaching. This finding is supported by various previous studies such as by Letchamanan et al., (2021), Shuhidan et al., (2024) and Sawalludin et al., (2020), which show that non-culturally based teaching strategies make it difficult for students to actively engage. Therefore, the need to train teachers in a contextual and culturally sensitive approach is urgent.

Thus, the mastery of pre-reading skills among Orang Asli preschool children can be improved through approaches that are appropriate to their culture, such as the use of Sewang songs in the teaching and learning process. Sewang songs not only serve as cultural heritage, but also have the potential to be a fun and effective learning medium to increase children's vocabulary, understanding and motivation to learn. The integration of Orang Asli cultural elements in early education can create meaningful, contextual and inclusive learning experiences, in line with the needs of the local community.

So, this study strengthens the argument that culturally based pedagogy, such as the use of Sewang songs, not only helps in the cognitive aspects of pre-reading, but also contributes to the affective and social development of Orang Asli children. Similarly, most studies involving cultural approaches and literacy teaching are still at the conceptual stage or have not been tested through large-scale intervention modules. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies focus on the development and evaluation of culturally-based teaching modules that can be practically used by preschool teachers, especially in Orang Asli communities. In addition, approaches that involve collaboration with communities and local leaders as discussed by

Dainal & Yuntalla, (2024) can increase the effectiveness of interventions and acceptance among students.

The contribution of this study lies in the comprehensive literature mapping of singing approaches in early education of minority communities, as well as identifying gaps that have not yet been systematically explored in the Malaysian context. The practical implications of this study are the need to develop teaching modules based on traditional songs, teacher training specific to Orang Asli pedagogy, and community involvement in developing authentic and meaningful teaching materials.

Conclusion

This study uses a scoping review of the literature on the use of songs, especially Sewang songs, as a medium in teaching pre-reading skills to Orang Asli preschool children. The results of this study have answered the first research question, namely being able to identify and map past studies related to the role of Sewang songs in teaching pre-reading skills to preschool children. Through the analysis of 25 selected articles, the findings show that a singing-based approach has been proven to have a positive impact on phonemic aspects, vocabulary mastery, and learning motivation among children Mohd Mokhtar et al., 2023); Triwardani, (2022); Beveridge, (2024). Traditional songs such as Sewang also play an important role in building identity, conveying cultural values, and making the teaching process more inclusive and contextual Anita Prest et al., (2021); Syazwan & Shahrom, (2024).

Mastery of pre-reading skills among Orang Asli preschool children can be improved through approaches that are appropriate to their culture, such as the use of Sewang songs in teaching and learning. Sewang songs not only function as cultural heritage, but also have the potential to be a fun and effective learning medium in increasing students' vocabulary, understanding, and motivation. Integrating the cultural elements of the Orang Asli community in early education can create meaningful, contextual and inclusive learning experiences, in line with the needs of the local community.

The results of this study have answered the second research question, namely being able to identify literature gaps related to the challenges faced by teachers in teaching pre-reading at the early childhood education level. In addition, past studies have shown various challenges faced by teachers in teaching pre-reading, including language differences, lack of culturally based teaching materials, lack of modules, teacher training constraints, as well as environmental and socioeconomic factors that affect the effectiveness of early education Shuhidan et al., (2024); Sawalludin et al., (2020); Nor Azwahanum Nor Shaid, Shahidi A. Hamid, (2022); Mahzan Awang et al., (2022) All these findings emphasize that the implementation of pre-reading teaching among the Orang Asli community requires a more holistic approach and sensitivity to the cultural context and reality of the local community.

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that further research be conducted in more depth in the form of field studies, module development or action research to empirically evaluate the effectiveness of using Sewang songs in teaching pre-reading. The development of early literacy modules based on Orang Asli culture needs to be implemented systematically so that it can be used as an official guide for preschool teachers. This effort needs to involve collaboration between researchers, teachers, Orang Asli communities and government agencies such as JAKOA and KPM to ensure its suitability and effectiveness Ahmad et al., (2022) ;

Arulmozhi (2024). This study benefits teachers, early childhood educators, parents, and related agencies such as JHEOA, SUHAKAM, KPM, and Orang Asli NGOs, in supporting a more inclusive and culturally friendly learning approach. In addition to increasing children's interest in learning, this study is hoped to foster a closer relationship between formal education and traditional culture, thus helping to improve teaching and learning and the achievement of pre-reading skills among children.

In addition, teacher training needs to emphasize aspects of culturally based pedagogy, intercultural communication, and the use of teaching aids that are relevant to the Orang Asli environment. This study also suggests that education policymakers re-evaluate the early childhood curriculum to be more flexible, open to the integration of local cultures and support the sustainability of indigenous community identities (SUHAKAM, 2024); Syazwan & Shahrom, (2024).

Overall, this study contributes to strengthening the discourse of literacy education in the context of minority communities and demonstrates the great potential of Sewang songs as a teaching medium that is not only effective from a pedagogical perspective, but also serves as a link between knowledge and culture. Ultimately, this study supports culturally responsive teaching as a powerful means to bridge the gap in early literacy among Indigenous preschool children in Malaysia.

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