

Enhancing Literacy And Reading Interest Among The Community Of Sandosi Village Through The Unwira Reading Centre

Kristianus Simon H. Molan^{1)*}, Yosef Dionisius Lamawuran²⁾, Frans Bapa Tokan³⁾

Widya Mandira Catholic University^{1),2),3)} (1), 2)Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Widya Mandira Catholic University, Indonesia) 3)Department of Government Studies, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Widya Mandira Catholic University, Indonesia)

email: kristianusmolan@unwira.ac.id¹⁾; dlamawuran@gmail.com²⁾; fransfisipunwira@gmail.com³⁾

Submitted: 08, Juny, 2025

Revised: 17, January, 2026

Published: 26, February, 2026

Abstract

This community service activity aims to enhance reading interest and digital literacy skills among the residents of Sandosi Village through the optimisation of the Unwira Reading House. The programme was conducted over three months, from March to May 2025, involving fifty participants comprising children, teenagers, and parents. A participatory approach was adopted to ensure the community played an active role in every stage of the activity. Implementation methods included a situational analysis, the provision of additional reading materials, group reading sessions, basic digital literacy training, and evaluation using pre-test and post-test instruments. The results of the activities showed an average increase in literacy skills from 58% to 87%, with more positive changes in learning behaviour, particularly among children and teenagers. The Unwira Reading House, which had previously been underutilised, is now once again being used as a shared learning space. Although the activities still face limitations in terms of facilities and internet connectivity, these results demonstrate that simple, community-based literacy initiatives can have a tangible impact on improving literacy at the village level.

Keywords: Literacy; Reading House; Digital Literacy; Community Empowerment

Abstrack

Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan minat membaca dan keterampilan literasi digital di kalangan penduduk Desa Sandosi melalui optimalisasi Rumah Baca Unwira. Program ini dilaksanakan selama tiga bulan, dari Maret hingga Mei 2025, melibatkan lima puluh peserta yang terdiri dari anak-anak, remaja, dan orang tua. Pendekatan partisipatif diadopsi untuk memastikan masyarakat berperan aktif dalam setiap tahap kegiatan. Metode implementasi meliputi analisis situasi, penyediaan bahan bacaan tambahan, sesi membaca kelompok, pelatihan literasi digital dasar, dan evaluasi menggunakan instrumen pra-tes dan pasca-tes. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan rata-rata keterampilan literasi dari 58% menjadi 87%, dengan perubahan yang lebih positif dalam perilaku belajar, khususnya di kalangan anak-anak dan remaja. Rumah Baca Unwira, yang sebelumnya kurang dimanfaatkan, kini kembali digunakan sebagai ruang belajar bersama. Meskipun kegiatan ini masih menghadapi keterbatasan dalam hal fasilitas dan konektivitas internet, hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa inisiatif literasi berbasis komunitas yang sederhana dapat memberikan dampak nyata dalam meningkatkan literasi di tingkat desa.

Kata kunci: Literasi; Rumah Baca; Literasi Digital; Pemberdayaan Masyarakat

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is fundamentally a core ability encompassing the skills of reading, writing, understanding, and critically analysing information (Rokhmawati et al., 2022; Utomo et al., 2024). However, in its conceptual development, literacy is no longer understood merely as a set of technical skills, but rather as a social practice that plays a role in shaping how individuals understand reality, produce knowledge, and participate in community life (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Nichols & LeBlanc, 2021). Good literacy enables individuals to participate actively in social, economic, and cultural life, and serves as a vital foundation for improving quality of life and sustainable development (E. Oghenekohwo & A. Frank-Oputu, 2017). Thus, literacy possesses a strategic dimension as an instrument of empowerment that determines an individual's capacity to access opportunities, make decisions, and adapt to increasingly complex social changes (Decaro et al., 2017; Pitsou et al., 2025). In the era of globalisation and modernisation, the concept of literacy has evolved into a multidimensional competence that is dynamic, contextual, and constantly transforming in line with the times (Costa, 2022; Roberts, 1998).

The development of information technology has taken literacy into a new realm: digital literacy. Digital literacy can be understood as the ability to access, understand, process, and disseminate information via digital devices (Ruslan et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2023). However, from a more critical perspective, digital literacy is not merely about operational skills in using technology, but also encompasses cognitive and reflective abilities in evaluating information, understanding the context of information production, and acting ethically within the digital space (Covello & Lei, 2010; Reddy et al., 2020). This literacy is rooted in two main traditions, namely computer literacy and information literacy (Hatlevik et al., 2018; Nguyen & Habók, 2024). Computer literacy began to develop in the 1980s alongside the increasing use of computing technology, whilst information literacy flourished in the 1990s as access to information became increasingly open through network technology (Resti et al., 2024; Syafril, 2023). The integration of these two traditions has given rise to a form of literacy that demands not only technological proficiency but also critical skills in filtering, verifying, and utilising information responsibly (Cuevas-Cerveró et al., 2023; Tewell, 2015). Therefore, digital literacy can be positioned as a key competency in navigating the complexities of the information ecosystem in the contemporary era (Shatila et al., 2025).

Although the urgency of digital literacy is increasingly recognised globally, literacy conditions in Indonesia still face multidimensional challenges, both at the structural and cultural levels (Akbar & Wijaya, 2023). The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report ranks Indonesia at the bottom in literacy, reflecting a low ability to understand, evaluate, and interpret texts in depth (Wijaya et al., 2024). This situation indicates that literacy has not yet been fully internalised as a cultural norm within society. These low achievements are not only caused by individual factors, but also by limited access to learning resources, a weak literacy ecosystem, and a lack of institutional support, particularly in rural areas (Omweri, 2024). Furthermore, inequalities in access to information technology further exacerbate the digital literacy gap, thereby widening disparities in the public's ability to access and utilise information (Lythreatis et al., 2022; Mossberger et al., 2003).

The village of Sandosi in East Flores Regency serves as a concrete example of the complexity of these issues. Based on field observations and discussions with the village

government, it was found that limited access to reading materials and low digital literacy skills have led to a low level of reading interest among the community. This situation not only limits the community's ability to access information but also hinders the development of critical thinking skills necessary for social and economic life. Furthermore, this situation reflects a link between low literacy levels and the scarcity of non-formal learning spaces at the community level, meaning that literacy practices have not yet developed into a sustainable social habit but remain sporadic and dependent on external interventions.

In an effort to address these challenges, students from Widya Mandira Catholic University (Unwira), through the 2023 PPM Thematic Community Service Programme (KKN-T), have established the Unwira Reading House in Sandosi Village. This reading room is designed to serve as a community learning centre, a provider of reading materials, and a platform for the development of digital literacy. From a theoretical perspective, the existence of a reading house can be understood as a form of institutionalisation of literacy spaces at the local level, functioning as a medium for knowledge interaction within the community. However, its utilisation remains limited due to a lack of reading materials, limited technological resources, and the absence of structured and sustainable literacy programmes (Statistics, 2023). On the other hand, the enthusiasm of the community, particularly children and young people, indicates significant potential for social participation as a fundamental asset in the development of community-based literacy.

These conditions indicate a gap between the existence of literacy infrastructure and the strengthening of literacy practices in community life. Various literacy initiatives at the village level tend to focus on providing physical facilities, but these have not been fully accompanied by empowerment strategies capable of fostering the internalisation of literacy values as part of social culture. Within the framework of community empowerment, literacy requires not only support in the form of facilities but also a process of continuous mentoring, active community participation, and the strengthening of local institutions. Thus, the strengthening of literacy must be understood as a process of social transformation involving the simultaneous interaction between social structures, agents, and context.

Consequently, a community literacy strengthening programme is required through the optimisation of the Unwira Reading House, which is not only focused on improving access but also on strengthening community capacity and participation. This strengthening strategy includes: (1) increasing the quantity and diversity of quality reading materials (Ratmono, 2022; Tella & Akande, 2007), (2) conducting community-needs-based digital literacy training, and (3) establishing village literacy communities as a mechanism for programme sustainability. The approach adopted is participatory, placing the community at the centre of the literacy process, thereby fostering the development of collective and sustainable literacy practices.

In addition to providing direct benefits to the community, this program also holds strategic relevance in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy and the achievement of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Higher Education (Baharuddin, 2021; Hermawan et al., 2022). This study specifically contributes by proposing a community-based literacy enhancement model that integrates reading culture and digital literacy through the optimization of reading houses in rural settings. Thus, this program is not only implementational but also offers a conceptual approach emphasizing the synergy

between conventional literacy and digital literacy within a community empowerment framework.

Thus, the strengthening of the Unwira Reading House in Sandosi Village is expected not only to increase community interest in reading and digital literacy skills but also to build an inclusive, participatory, and sustainable literacy ecosystem. In a broader context, this program underscores that literacy is a social practice that must be built through the integration of access, capacity, and community participation, thereby serving as a strategic instrument in the empowerment of rural communities in the digital age.

METHOD

This community service activity was carried out in Sandosi Village, East Flores Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, from March to May 2025. The programme's target group comprises children, adolescents, and adults, with a total of 50 participants directly involved in the entire series of activities. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, taking into account representation of age groups, levels of engagement in literacy activities, and potential contributions to the development of the Reading House as a community learning space.

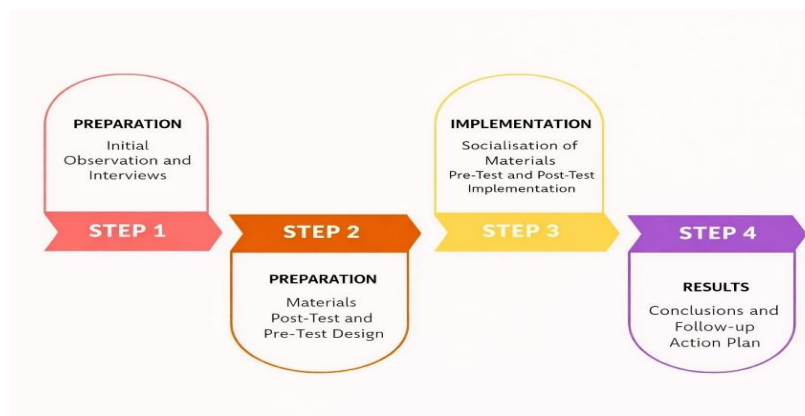


Figure 1. Flowchart of Community Service Activities

Methodologically, this programme was designed using a participatory approach rooted in the paradigm of community empowerment. In this approach, the community is not merely positioned as the object of intervention, but as active subjects involved in the process of problem identification, formulation of solutions, implementation of activities, and programme evaluation (Norvaizi et al., 2025; Prabasiwi & Sakre, 2025). The participatory approach was chosen as it is considered capable of fostering the internalisation of literacy values and ensuring the programme's sustainability through an enhanced sense of ownership among the community regarding the literacy activities developed.

The activity design employed is descriptive-evaluative with a pre-experimental approach, namely through pre-intervention (pre-test) and post-intervention (post-test) measurements to assess changes in participants' literacy levels. This design allows for the quantitative measurement of the programme's impact whilst also understanding the qualitative dynamics of change within the social context of the community. Figure 1 illustrates the flow of the community service activities, comprising four main stages: situation analysis, programme planning, intervention implementation, and evaluation and mentoring.

The first stage is a situational analysis conducted to identify the community's initial literacy conditions. Data collection was carried out through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the village government and the community. Observation is used to identify the physical condition of the Reading House and patterns of literacy activities, whilst interviews and FGDs are used to explore the community's perceptions, needs, and the challenges they face regarding reading literacy and digital literacy. The data obtained is analysed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, involving data reduction, categorisation, and drawing conclusions to produce a comprehensive problem mapping.

The second stage involved programme planning, which was developed based on the results of the community needs analysis. Activities at this stage included the development of contextually relevant digital literacy training materials, the procurement and expansion of reading material collections through collaboration with publishers and donors, and institutional coordination with the village government and Reading House managers. Evaluation instruments, comprising pre-tests and post-tests, were also developed during this stage. These instruments were developed based on literacy indicators covering aspects of reading interest, the ability to comprehend information, the ability to search for information, as well as media and digital literacy. To ensure the quality of the instruments, a simple pilot test was conducted to assess participants' understanding of the items.

The third phase involved the implementation of the programme intervention, comprising three main, mutually integrated components. Firstly, a reading literacy programme carried out through group reading sessions, book discussions, and simple writing exercises. These activities aim to build reading habits and improve the ability to understand and interpret texts. Second, digital literacy training focused on introducing the use of digital devices, effective information-searching techniques, the ability to evaluate the credibility of information sources, and a basic understanding of digital ethics and security. Third, the formation of a village literacy community involving various age groups as an effort to strengthen local institutions in the independent and sustainable management of the Reading House. These three components are comprehensively designed to integrate conventional literacy and digital literacy within a single framework of community empowerment.

The fourth stage is evaluation and mentoring. Quantitative evaluation is conducted by comparing pre-test and post-test results to measure improvements in participants' literacy. Data is analysed using descriptive statistics, including calculations of mean values, percentages, and the difference in score improvements. Meanwhile, qualitative evaluation is carried out through participatory observation and interviews to identify behavioural changes, levels of participation, and the social dynamics that emerge during the programme. This approach allows for data triangulation, ensuring that evaluation results are not merely numerical but also contextual.

In addition to the evaluation, ongoing support was provided through monitoring the activities of the literacy communities that had been formed. This support aimed to ensure the programme's sustainability and to strengthen the community's capacity to manage the Reading Houses as community learning centres. Thus, the methods employed were not solely focused on measuring short-term impacts, but also on the process of social transformation that fosters the establishment of literacy practices as an integral part of community life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service activity was carried out in Sandosi Village, Witihama Sub-district, East Flores Regency, over a three-month period, from March to May 2025. The programme involved fifty participants comprising children, teenagers, parents, and village officials. All activities were centred at the Unwira Reading House, which had previously been established as a village literacy facility. The programme was implemented in a participatory manner, with the community directly involved in every stage, from planning and implementation to evaluation.

Conceptually, the participatory approach used in this initiative is not merely a technical strategy for community engagement, but rather part of a community empowerment paradigm. In the context of village literacy, active community involvement is key to ensuring the programme does not remain a temporary intervention, but develops into a sustainable social movement. The Unwira Reading House is positioned not merely as a physical space providing books, but as a social space enabling learning interactions, knowledge exchange, and the collective formation of literacy habits.

The implementation of activities centred in a single location also holds strategic significance. The Reading House serves as a symbol of the presence of an alternative learning space outside formal schooling. In rural communities, the existence of non-formal learning spaces often acts as a distinguishing factor in fostering a reading culture. Therefore, the optimisation of the Unwira Reading House aims not only to improve access to reading materials but also to create a more inclusive and welcoming literacy ecosystem for all age groups.

The initial phase of implementation began with observations and brief interviews to map the community's literacy conditions. The findings indicated that reading interest remained low, the collection of reading materials was limited, and digital literacy skills were underdeveloped. Based on this analysis, the community service team identified two main focuses for the activities: fostering a reading culture and introducing basic digital literacy.

These initial findings suggest that literacy issues in Sandosi Village are not only related to the availability of reading materials, but also concern the community's learning habits and motivation. Low interest in reading is often influenced by a lack of environmental stimulation that encourages reading as a regular habit. On the other hand, limited digital literacy skills indicate a gap in access to technology-based information, which has the potential to widen the knowledge gap between rural and urban communities.

By combining these two areas of focus, this programme aims to address literacy challenges in a more comprehensive manner. A reading culture is reinforced as the foundational basis for literacy, whilst digital literacy is introduced as an adaptive skill relevant to the evolving times. This synergy between conventional literacy and digital literacy is essential so that the community is not only able to read text, but also to understand and utilise information across various media formats.



Figure 2. Initial outreach and coordination activities for the literacy programme with the community

The outreach activities carried out in collaboration with the village government and community leaders served as a strategic first step in ensuring the programme's sustainability. This process serves not only to convey information but also as a space for building social legitimacy regarding the existence and strengthening of the Unwira Reading House. Support from village officials and local leaders has a significant influence on the level of community participation, as in a rural context, social legitimacy is often determined by the support of authoritative figures at the community level.

This initial coordination also forms a vital foundation for fostering a sense of ownership among the community regarding the literacy programme. Without this sense of ownership, empowerment programmes often cease when external facilitators are no longer present. Therefore, the collaborative approach adopted in the early stages of the initiative represents a long-term social investment in the sustainability of the Reading House as a village literacy centre.

During the implementation of group reading sessions and literacy support, participants are not merely guided to read texts, but are also trained to comprehend the content through simple discussions and group reflection. This method is designed to shift reading from a purely mechanical activity into a cognitive one involving understanding, interpretation, and the communication of the text's content. This dialogic approach demonstrates that literacy is not merely the technical ability to read letters, but the ability to think critically about the information obtained.

Participants' responses indicated a shift in interaction patterns during the sessions. Children who were initially passive began to dare to read aloud in front of their peers, whilst teenagers showed an interest in seeking additional reading material outside the mentoring sessions. These changes suggest that providing a safe and supportive space is highly influential in building the confidence of novice readers.

Meanwhile, during the digital literacy sessions, participants were introduced to the wise and productive use of digital devices. The material emphasised not only technical skills for accessing information via the internet, but also the ability to discern valid and relevant information. In an era of information overload, the ability to filter information is a crucial

aspect in building a discerning society that is not easily swayed by hoaxes or misleading information.

The integration of conventional reading activities with digital literacy training demonstrates that literacy in the contemporary era must be understood in a multidimensional way. Society requires not only access to physical books but also the skills to navigate digital information. Consequently, the Reading House has transformed not merely into a centre for printed reading materials but also into a centre for technology-based learning that is relevant to the needs of the times.

Overall, the stages of these activities demonstrate that strengthening literacy requires a combination of structural approaches (provision of facilities and reading materials) and cultural approaches (habituation and motivation). Without habituation, facilities will not be utilised optimally. Conversely, without adequate facilities, the motivation to read is difficult to sustain in the long term.



Figure 3. The atmosphere of reading and digital literacy training at the Unwira Reading House

The activities depicted in Figure 3 illustrate the dynamics of interaction that are beginning to develop more naturally amongst participants. At this stage, the changes occurring are no longer limited to participation in facilitated activities, but are beginning to lead to the formation of new social habits. The interactions established in the reading room indicate that reading activities are gradually transforming into shared activities with social value, rather than merely individual pursuits.

This phenomenon indicates that the Reading House serves not only as a physical facility providing reading materials, but also as a social space that enables the formation of a learning community. In the context of rural communities, shared spaces that encourage intellectual interaction play a strategic role in building a collective culture of literacy. When reading takes place in a communal atmosphere, participants' intrinsic motivation tends to increase due to the social support that reinforces behavioural consistency.

Furthermore, the changes observed in participants also indicate a shift in learning orientation. Whereas in the early stages of the activity participants were more receptive to guidance, at this stage they began to take the initiative to choose their own reading material, engage in spontaneous discussions, and share information with peers. This shift serves as an important indicator that literacy programmes not only improve technical reading skills but also foster independent learning.

From a community empowerment perspective, this situation reflects the process of internalising the value of literacy. Literacy is no longer understood as an academic obligation synonymous with formal schooling, but as a social necessity relevant to daily life. This process of internalisation forms a crucial foundation for ensuring the programme's sustainability, as internal behavioural changes tend to be more enduring than those triggered solely by external interventions.

Furthermore, the dynamics that emerged after several sessions showed that the Reading House began to function as a meeting point across generations. Children, teenagers and parents shared the same activity space, thereby creating a transfer of values and experiences that enriched the learning process. This cross-generational interaction has the potential to strengthen the village's literacy ecosystem more comprehensively, as a reading culture is not built solely within a specific group, but becomes a shared social practice. This transformation of physical space into a social space is one of the key achievements of the literacy enhancement programme in Sandosi Village. This stage subsequently forms the foundation that underpins the quantitative findings in the following section regarding the improvement in participants' reading comprehension and interest.

Table 1. Results of the Digital Literacy Pre-Test and Post-Test

Aspects Measured	Average Pre-Test Score	Average Post-Test Score	Improvement
Interest in reading	55%	85%	+30%
Information-seeking skills	60%	90%	+30%
Media and digital literacy	58%	87%	+29

The increase in the average score from 58% to 87% indicates a significant change in participants' level of literacy understanding and awareness. However, these figures do not merely represent quantitative achievements; rather, they reflect the success of a learning process that is both gradual and participatory. This change indicates that the mentoring methods applied were able to bridge the initial gap between low reading interest and the need to improve literacy skills.

More deeply, this increase in scores indicates that participants not only acquired new information but also underwent a process of knowledge internalisation. This internalisation is evident in the participants' ability to rephrase concepts of literacy, the benefits of reading, and the importance of critically evaluating digital information. In other words, there has been a shift from merely receiving material to understanding and interpreting the material provided.

Analysis of the indicators in the table also shows that the improvement was not partial but relatively consistent across every aspect measured. This indicates that the programme's approach is comprehensive, not merely emphasising a single dimension of literacy. The balance between reading literacy and digital literacy serves as a factor reinforcing these outcomes, as participants gained a holistic understanding of literacy as a multidimensional competence.

Furthermore, the improvement in post-test scores can also be attributed to a shift towards a more inclusive and dialogue-based learning environment. When participants are actively engaged in discussions and reflection, the learning process becomes more meaningful than with one-way lecture methods. Emotional and social engagement in the learning process contributes to improved retention of understanding, meaning that the post-test results reflect more substantial changes rather than merely a temporary improvement.

It is important to note that these achievements are influenced not only by the frequency of sessions but also by the consistency of mentoring and social support. The participation of parents and village officials in several activity sessions further strengthened the programme's legitimacy, so that participants felt that literacy activities held social value recognised by their community. Such social support acts as a reinforcing factor that encourages the sustainability of reading interest after the programme concludes.

Thus, the pre-test and post-test results serve not only as indicators of the technical success of the activities but also as a reflection of the initial transformation in the literacy culture of the Sandosi village community. This improvement demonstrates that contextually designed and community-based interventions hold great potential for building literacy capacity in a sustainable manner.



Figure 4. Participants in the literacy activity posing for a group photo in front of the Unwira Reading House

Figure 4 shows that literacy activities do not merely take place in a structured learning format, but have evolved into more fluid and interactive activities. At this stage, participants demonstrate more active engagement, whether in reading, discussing, or sharing experiences related to the reading materials they access. This pattern of participation indicates that literacy activities have moved from an introductory phase towards a phase of habitual practice.

This change serves as a key indicator that the Reading House is beginning to function as a vibrant learning space. Reading activities no longer rely entirely on the facilitator but are starting to emerge as a need felt by the participants themselves. In the context of community empowerment, this situation reflects a shift from dependence on facilitators towards self-reliance in learning.

Furthermore, the interactions formed during the activities demonstrate the strengthening of knowledge-based social relationships. Simple discussions about the content

of the reading material, asking one another about the information gained, and sharing insights on the wise use of digital media have become new social practices that were previously rare. This process shows that literacy not only impacts individual capabilities but also strengthens social dynamics within the community.

The involvement of various age groups in the same space also contributes to the formation of a more inclusive literacy ecosystem. Children receive moral support from teenagers and parents, whilst the adult group begins to realise the importance of supporting the younger generation in reading activities. This intergenerational synergy serves as a vital social capital in maintaining the sustainability of literacy culture at the village level.

The literacy enhancement carried out through the optimisation of the Unwira Reading House also has broader social implications for the community of Sandosi Village. This programme not only impacts the improvement of reading skills and digital literacy in the short term, but also has the potential to foster a mindset within the community that is more open to information and lifelong learning. In the context of village development, this shift in mindset becomes a vital asset for encouraging active community participation in various other development programmes.

The sustainability of the programme is a crucial aspect that requires attention. Experience in various regions shows that many literacy programmes cease once the mentoring phase ends due to the absence of a clear management structure and adequate institutional support. Therefore, the formation of a village literacy community within this initiative is a strategic step to ensure the self-sustaining operation of the Reading House. It is hoped that these communities will act as the driving force behind regular activities such as group reading, book discussions, and advanced digital literacy training.

Furthermore, support from the village government in the form of policies and budget allocations is also a key factor in long-term success. Integrating literacy programmes into village development planning will strengthen the legitimacy and sustainability of the activities. Reading Houses can be positioned as part of community empowerment programmes, particularly in the development of human resources among the younger generation.

The reading house-based literacy strengthening model implemented in Sandosi Village demonstrates that simple yet consistent interventions can yield significant changes. This model emphasises three main pillars: the provision of literacy facilities, participatory mentoring, and the formation of a managing community. These three pillars complement one another and form the foundation for building a sustainable village literacy ecosystem.

By taking into account the social dynamics and potential of the community, this programme can be further developed into a broader village literacy movement. If adaptively replicated in other villages with similar characteristics, this approach has the potential to make a tangible contribution to improving literacy among rural communities at the regional level.

CONCLUSION

The literacy-building activities through the optimisation of the Unwira Reading House in Sandosi Village demonstrate that community-based interventions have significant effectiveness in fostering sustainable literacy practices. This programme underscores that literacy cannot be reduced to a mere technical skill, but must be understood as a social practice shaped through interaction, habit formation, and collective participation in community life.

Consequently, literacy enhancement at the village level requires an approach that is not only focused on improving individual capabilities but also on transforming the social environment to support literacy practices.

The results of the activities indicate an increase in participants' understanding of the importance of reading and their basic digital literacy skills. However, the programme's primary contribution lies not solely in improved cognitive outcomes, but in the resulting changes in patterns of participation and the accompanying social dynamics. The reactivation of the Reading House as a vibrant, inclusive, and intergenerational learning space indicates that literacy can develop more effectively when facilitated through social spaces that enable continuous knowledge exchange.

These findings reinforce the argument that the success of literacy programmes is largely determined by the integration of access, support, and participation. A participatory approach involving the village government, community leaders, and people of various age groups not only increases engagement but also creates social mechanisms that support the programme's sustainability. In this context, literacy shifts from an individual activity to a collective practice institutionalised within community life.

From a community empowerment perspective, this programme demonstrates that literacy has a transformative function that extends beyond the academic dimension (Sager, 2022; Prastiwi & Damar, 2025). Literacy serves as an instrument to expand cognitive capacity, strengthen reflective ability, and enhance the community's capacity to manage and utilise information critically (Heard et al., 2025; Weiner, 2011). In the digital age, this function has become increasingly crucial given the rising complexity and risks of disinformation within the information ecosystem (Komendantova et al., 2023; Zimdars & McLeod, 2020).

Furthermore, experiences in Sandosi Village indicate that the existence of literacy infrastructure, such as the Reading House, does not automatically yield results unless accompanied by systematic activation strategies. Literacy infrastructure will only be effective when integrated with sustainable social practices through mentoring, habit formation, and the strengthening of local institutions. In other words, the success of literacy programmes does not lie in the provision of facilities alone, but in the ability to bring these facilities to life through their social functions.

The implications of these findings are strategic for the development of literacy policies at the village level. The integration of literacy programmes into the village development agenda, sustained institutional support, and the strengthening of local literacy communities are key factors in ensuring the sustainability of the programme. This approach enables literacy to develop as part of the village's social system, rather than as a temporary intervention dependent on external parties.

Conceptually, this initiative offers a community-based literacy strengthening model that emphasises synergy between structural (access and facilities), cultural (habits and values), and social (participation and institutional) dimensions. This model contributes to the development of literacy approaches in rural areas, particularly in the context of integrating conventional literacy and digital literacy within a community empowerment framework.

However, this initiative has limitations in terms of the relatively short duration of the intervention and the limited scope of participants, meaning that long-term impacts cannot yet be comprehensively measured. Consequently, further research and programmes are required to

assess the sustainability of literacy practices and the effectiveness of the developed model within a broader context.

Thus, the strengthening of literacy through the Unwira Reading House in Sandosi Village underscores that sustainable village development depends not only on physical infrastructure but also on the development of the community's intellectual and cultural capacity. Literacy, as a collective social practice, will serve as strategic social capital in driving the transformation of rural communities. Ultimately, this model is not only relevant in a local context but also has the potential to be replicated as an alternative approach to reducing literacy gaps across various regions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express gratitude to the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) of Widya Mandira Catholic University for its financial support through the 2025 Regular Community Service Grant, which has enabled this activity to be carried out successfully. This institutional support provided not only financial assistance but also administrative and academic guidance, which was invaluable throughout the planning, implementation, and reporting of the community service activities.

Gratitude is also extended to the Sandosi Village Government for providing full support, whether in the form of venue facilitation, coordination with the community, or active participation throughout the duration of the activities. The collaboration between the community service team and the village government was a key factor in fostering a collaborative atmosphere and strengthening the programme's legitimacy within the community.

Sincere appreciation is also extended to the managers of the Unwira Reading House and the entire community of Sandosi Village, particularly the children, teenagers and parents who enthusiastically took part in every stage of the activities. The community's active participation and openness towards this literacy programme constitute invaluable social capital in fostering the sustainability of the village literacy movement.

Thanks are also extended to the students of the Public Administration and Government Studies Programme who were involved in field support, the preparation of materials, and the evaluation process of the activities. The dedication and collaborative spirit demonstrated throughout the programme were a vital part of the success of this literacy-building initiative. May the cooperation that has been established continue in various community empowerment programmes in the future.

REFERENCES

- Akbar, M., & Wijaya, G. (2023). Digital literacy of rural areas in Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Rural Socio- Economic Transformation, RUSSET*, 1(1), 1–13.
- Baharuddin, M. R. (2021). Adaptation of the 'Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka' curriculum (Focus: MBKM programme study models). *Journal of Teacher Studies and Learning*, 4(1), 195–205. <https://doi.org/10.30605/jsgp.4.1.2021.591>
- Brandt, D., & Clinton, K. (2002). Limits of the Local: Expanding Perspectives on Literacy as a Social Practice. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 34(3), 337–356.

- https://doi.org/10.1207/s15548430jlr3403_4
- BPS. (2023). *Education Statistics 2023*. Central Statistics Agency, 12, 1–242.
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2012). *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community*. Routledge.
- Costa, I. (2022). Are nurses being heard? The power of Freirean dialogue to transform the nursing profession. *International Health Trends and Perspectives*, 2(2), 217–222. <https://doi.org/10.32920/ihtp.v2i2.1651>
- Covello, S., & Lei, J. (2010). A review of digital literacy assessment instruments. *Syracuse University*, 1, 31.
- Cuevas-Cerveró, A., Colmenero-Ruiz, M.-J., & Martínez-Ávila, D. (2023). Critical information literacy as a form of information activism. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 49(6), 102786.
- E. Oghenekohwo, J., & A. Frank-Oputu, E. (2017). Literacy Education and Sustainable Development in Developing Societies. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 5(2), 126. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.126>
- Hatlevik, O. E., Throndsen, I., Loi, M., & Gudmundsdottir, G. B. (2018). Students' ICT self-efficacy and computer and information literacy: Determinants and relationships. *Computers & Education*, 118, 107–119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2017.11.011>
- Heard, J., Scoular, C., Duckworth, D., Ramalingam, D., & Teo, I. (2025). *Critical thinking: Skill development framework*.
- Hermawan, D., Supriyanto, A., Hakim, D. A., & Nofanti, A. C. (2022). Perceptions of students in the Computer Science programme at Al Azhar University Indonesia regarding the implementation of the 'Merdeka Belajar' curriculum. *Al Azhar Indonesia Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 442925.
- Komendantova, N., Erokhin, D., & Albano, T. (2023). Misinformation and its impact on contested policy issues: the example of migration discourses. *Societies*, 13(7), 168.
- Lythreathis, S., Singh, S. K., & El-Kassar, A.-N. (2022). The digital divide: A review and future research agenda. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 175, 121359.
- Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C. J., & Stansbury, M. (2003). *Virtual inequality: Beyond the digital divide*. Georgetown University Press.
- Nguyen, L. A. T., & Habók, A. (2024). Tools for assessing teacher digital literacy: a review. *Journal of Computers in Education*, 11(1), 305–346. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-022-00257-5>
- Nichols, T. P., & LeBlanc, R. J. (2021). Media education and the limits of "literacy": Ecological orientations to performative platforms. *Curriculum inquiry*, 51(4), 389–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2020.1865104>
- Norvaizi, I., Anggita, L., & others. (2025). Paulo Freire's Perspective on Liberation Education. *Abdurrauf Journal of Education and Islamic Studies*, 1(3), 141–150.
- Omweri, F. S. (2024). A systematic literature review of e-government implementation in developing countries: examining urban-rural disparities, institutional capacity, and socio-cultural factors in the context of local governance and progress towards SDG 16.6. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(8), 1173–1199. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRIS.2024.808088>
- Pitsou, C., Koios, N., & Nizamis, K. E. (2025). *Bioethical Literacy in Higher Education*:

Insights from Postgraduate Students.

- Prabasiwi, N., & Sakre, T. (2025). Integration of Environmental Education Through the Practice of Painting with Natural Dyes at SMPN 21 Surabaya. *QALAMUNA: Journal of Education, Social Sciences, and Religion*, 17(2), 995–1004.
- Prastiwi, T. P., Rohmah, J. N., & Damar, D. (2025). The Role of Digital Literacy in Empowering Rural Communities. *Empowering Communities Research Hub*, 1(1), 11–18.
- Ratmono, D. (2022). Manuscript Acquisition Strategies at the National Library Press in Efforts to Enhance Reading Materials and Literacy Among the Indonesian Public. *Pustabilia: Journal of Library and Information Science*, 6(2), 257–276. <https://doi.org/10.18326/pustabilia.v6i2.257-276>
- Reddy, P., Sharma, B., & Chaudhary, K. (2020). Digital literacy: A review of literature. *International Journal of Technoethics (IJT)*, 11(2), 65–94.
- Roberts, P. (1998). Extending literate horizons: Paulo Freire and the multidimensional word. *Educational Review*, 50(2), 105–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013191980500203>
- Rokhmawati, D., Kirom, N. R., & Yuniwati, E. D. (2022). The Youth Movement for Literacy Awareness Around Wisnuwardhana University (GEMAR LITERASI) Imam Suryanto, Public Relations Officer at the Ministry of Trade, in a webinar titled “Siapka.” 6(1), 1–10.
- Ruslan, R., Irmawati, M., Fandini, I., Umar, U., & others. (2024). Digital Literacy Education: Supporting Digital Transformation for the Younger Generation in Nepo Village, Polewali Mandar Regency. *UNDIKMA Community Service Journal*, 5(1), 100–108.
- Responsibility, E., Affairs, P., & Agency, E. P. (2017). Decision Making in Adaptive Environmental Governance. *Ecology and Society*, 22(1), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09154-220133>.
- Sager, T. (2022). Advocacy planning: were expectations fulfilled? *Planning Perspectives*, 37(6), 1205–1230.
- Shatila, K., Aranega, A. Y., Soga, L. R., & Hernández-Lara, A. B. (2025). Digital literacy, digital accessibility, human capital, and entrepreneurial resilience: a case for dynamic business ecosystems. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, 10(3), 100709.
- Siregar, S., Rizal, R., & Indera, I. (2023). Digital literacy: enhancing understanding and education among the millennial generation at SMK Islam Adiluwih. *NEAR: Journal of Community Service*, 3(1), 96–101.
- Tella, A., & Akande, S. O. (2007). Children’s reading habits and availability of books in Botswana primary schools: Implications for achieving quality education.
- Tewell, E. (2015). A decade of critical information literacy: A review of the literature. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 9(1), 2.
- Utomo, A. P. Y., Sugiharto, D. Y. P., Kesuma, R. G., & Prasandha, D. (2024). Student literacy and literacy skills in higher education: A bibliometric review. *International Journal of Pedagogy and Teacher Education*, 8(2), 159. <https://doi.org/10.20961/ijpte.v8i2.84533>
- Weiner, J. M. (2011). Is there a difference between critical thinking and information literacy? A Systematic Review 2000–2009. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 5(2).
- Wijaya, T. T., Hidayat, W., Hermita, N., Alim, J. A., Talib, C. A., & others. (2024). Exploring contributing factors to PISA 2022 mathematics achievement: Insights from Indonesian

teachers. *Infinity Journal*, 13(1), 139–156. <https://doi.org/10.22460/infinity.v13i1.p139-156>

Zimdars, M., & McLeod, K. (2020). *Fake news: understanding media and misinformation in the digital age*. MIT Press.