

# The Role of Village Libraries in Improving Reading Literacy Among Residents of Bantul, Yogyakarta

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## **Abstract.**

*This community service programme aims to promote literacy improvement and community empowerment in rural areas by optimising the role of the Wukirsari Village Library as a community-based education centre. The activities are carried out using a participatory approach that actively involves the community in three main stages: mapping literacy issues, implementing programmes such as providing reading corners and digital literacy training, and conducting joint evaluations of achievements and impacts. The results of the implementation show that the participation of residents and local stakeholders plays an important role in formulating contextual and sustainable solutions. The programme has successfully increased reading interest, digital skills, and the capacity of village library managers. The Wukirsari Village Library can also serve as a reference for the development of adaptive and community-empowerment-based village libraries. This underscores the importance of synergy between local policies, community support, and village-potential-based approaches to achieving inclusive and sustainable literacy development.*

**Keywords:** *Community Literacy; Village Library; Community Empowerment; Community Participation*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Rural areas in Indonesia still face various complex challenges in their efforts to optimise their potential. Most are still struggling with structural problems such as high poverty rates, economic backwardness and lack of access to information, as well as various forms of inequality that hinder the process of equitable community growth and development (Rahman, E. Y., Ferizaldi, F., Hermawati, I., Wijayanti, L. A., & Mahmudin, 2024). One important aspect that contributes to this problem is the low literacy rate among rural communities (Wardana et al., 2022).

Literacy, as the basic foundation for improving the quality of human resources, remains a serious problem in various regions, including in Bantul Regency (Suryana et al., 2025). The level of interest in reading among the public is relatively low when compared to other countries in the region and globally. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the results of various international surveys such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA),

although the level of reading ability in Indonesia is quite high, the quality of literacy and reading culture is still relatively low (Sari & Setiawan, 2023). This situation poses a significant obstacle to efforts to improve education, access to information, and community welfare, particularly in rural areas that are in dire need of comprehensive community capacity building.

The central government and local governments responded to this issue by designing a village library development programme integrated into the Community Service Programme (Dani & Mu'aimanah, 2024). Village libraries are not only used as places to read and borrow books, but have also transformed into centres for education, skills training, and community-based policy advocacy that involves the active participation of villagers.

The Wukirsari Village Library in Bantul Regency is a concrete representation of the implementation of this programme. The Wukirsari Village Library is a village library located at Jl. Pramuka Km. 1, Manggung, Wukirsari, Imogiri, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. This library was officially established on 28 October 2012. Since its inception, the Wukirsari Village Library has experienced rapid development and transformed into a centre for literacy and community empowerment in the Wukirsari area. In addition to providing book lending services, the library actively organises various activities such as community training, empowerment programmes, literacy policy advocacy, and the provision of reading corners in several surrounding villages (Ujang, 2020).

This community service programme through village libraries shows how village libraries can serve as community learning centres, community empowerment centres, and social interaction spaces that support the improvement of literacy and community capacity. Collaboration between village governments, non-governmental organisations, local communities, and other stakeholders is key to the success of the Wukirsari Village Library (Haq, M. S., Cahyaningrum, S. D., Darmawan, D., & Maharani, 2024). This initiative has successfully established reading corners in every hamlet, organised skills training based on local needs, and conducted ongoing literacy programme outreach.

The management and development of village libraries are further strengthened by village fund allocation policies and regional regulations that support community literacy development. This reflects the local government's commitment to supporting the sustainability of literacy programmes. However, several challenges still need to be addressed, including: strengthening regulations that support the operational aspects of village libraries, improving cross-sectoral coordination, and enhancing human resource capacity, particularly among village library managers, to ensure they are more professional and adaptable to technological advancements and community needs (Halawa, A. G., Pasaribu, J., & Tobing, 2025).

In response to the challenges of literacy and improving the quality of human resources in rural areas, the Wukirsari Village Library serves as an innovative model for integrated village library management that is aligned with community service programmes. Through literacy activities, training, and cross-sector collaboration, this library plays a strategic role in enhancing reading interest, information access, and community empowerment, making it relevant for exploring best practices, challenges, and opportunities for the development of village libraries in the modern era.

## **II. METHODS**

This community service activity uses a community-based participatory approach (Yulian et al., 2022). The participatory approach is understood as a location-specific community empowerment programme that can be claimed as a form of sustainable development, encouraging local initiatives

to address issues independently (Kitphati et al., 2022). The activity was carried out in three main stages.

1. First, the identification of literacy needs and issues was carried out through observation, interviews, and discussions with the managers of the Wukirsari Village Library, village officials, and local residents.
2. Second, the planning and implementation of the literacy programme, which included the provision of reading corners in the hamlets, digital literacy training and skills based on local potential, as well as capacity building for village library managers.
3. Third, participatory monitoring and evaluation were carried out to assess the effectiveness of the activities and formulate strategies for the sustainability of the programme. The activities were also accompanied by documentation and dissemination of the results as a reference for good practices that can be replicated in other areas facing similar literacy issues.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

#### 1. Identification of Literacy Needs and Issues

Community service activities began with the process of identifying literacy needs and issues through field observations and intensive discussions with the managers of the Wukirsari Village Library, village officials, and local residents. From these discussions, it was revealed that one of the main challenges faced was low reading interest and limited access to information, particularly in terms of utilising digital technology as a medium for learning and communication. To address these issues, initial activities included educational sessions and interactive dialogues discussing the urgency of strengthening literacy, both in conventional and digital forms, as a foundation for improving human resource quality and supporting sustainable community empowerment.

Documentation of the activities is shown in the following image:



**Figure 1. Conventional and Digital Literacy Education Activities at the Wukirsari Village Library**

#### 2. Literacy Programme Planning and Implementation

In the second stage, literacy programmes were planned and implemented, including the provision of reading corners in each hamlet as a strategic step to expand access to reading materials. In addition, digital literacy and local potential-based skills training was organised to improve residents' ability to use information technology productively. This training was also designed to strengthen the capacity of library managers to professionally manage library services and resources while remaining responsive to technological advancements. The activities aimed not only to increase reading interest but also to empower the community to become more independent in accessing and managing information for improved quality of life and strengthened local economy. Documentation of the activities is shown in the following image:



**Figure 2. Implementation of Digital Literacy Training and Local Potential-Based Reading Corners in Wukirsari**

### **3. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation**

The third stage of community service activities at the Wukirsari Village Library is the implementation of participatory monitoring and evaluation, which aims to assess the effectiveness of the literacy programme and formulate sustainability strategies. The evaluation is conducted collaboratively between library managers, residents, and stakeholders through reflective discussions and field data collection to identify achievements, challenges, and the programme's impact on increasing reading interest and community empowerment. Evaluation indicators include the number of visits and book loans, the effectiveness of digital literacy training, and the sustainability of reading corner management in each village. Evaluation results are systematically documented as a reference for programme improvements and the dissemination of best practices that can be replicated in other areas. This participatory approach also strengthens cross-sectoral synergies and ensures the sustainability of literacy programmes that are adaptive to community dynamics and technological developments.

Documentation of the activities is shown in the following image:



**Figure 3. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation of the Literacy Programme at the Wukirsari Village Library**

### **Discussion**

The results of community service activities at the Wukirsari Village Library show that a community-based participatory approach is effective in identifying needs, designing solutions, and ensuring the sustainability of literacy programmes in rural areas. During the identification phase, the active participation of library managers, village officials, and residents enabled the mapping of key challenges, namely low reading interest and limited access to information, particularly in the use of digital technology. Awareness-raising activities and interactive dialogues successfully increased community awareness of the importance of both conventional and digital literacy as the foundation for improving human resource quality.

During the implementation phase, the provision of reading corners in villages and digital literacy training based on local potential successfully expanded access to reading materials and improved residents' ability to use technology productively. This training also encouraged community independence in accessing and managing information to support economic and social activities. Strengthening the capacity of library managers also played a role in maintaining the professionalism and responsiveness of library services to community needs.

The participatory monitoring and evaluation phase showed that joint reflection between residents and stakeholders was effective in assessing the achievements, obstacles, and impacts of the activities. The evaluation of indicators such as the number of visitors, book loans, training effectiveness, and the sustainability of reading corners became the basis for future programme improvements. The documentation of activity results also played an important role as a reference for replication in other areas with similar problems.

Overall, the success of this literacy programme is inseparable from multi-stakeholder synergy, policy support, and shared commitment between the village government, community, and relevant partners. The participatory approach applied has been able to encourage independence, strengthen collaborative networks, and ensure the sustainability of literacy programmes that are responsive to social dynamics and technological developments in rural areas.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Community service at the Wukirsari Village Library shows that a participatory approach is effective in improving literacy and empowering rural communities. Through needs identification, the provision of reading corners, and digital literacy training based on local potential, this programme has succeeded in expanding access to information and improving the capacity of residents. Participatory evaluation also ensures the sustainability of the programme. The Wukirsari Village Library serves as a best practice example of village library management as a community-based literacy and empowerment centre.

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