

## ENHANCING COMMUNITY LITERACY THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN COMMUNITY READING PARK

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### Abstract

The lack of interest in reading is not attributed to the scarcity of reading materials, but rather to the absence of a communal inclination towards reading activities. Many public libraries or reading parks remain underutilized by the community. A well-devised strategy for community reading parks is imperative to stimulate and expedite the realization of a society focused on learning. One feasible approach is involving the community. This study aims to determine the community engagement strategy, encompassing planning, implementation, outcomes, and influencing factors. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the research enlisted three managers from the Cibungur Reading Community Park, five members from the local community, and two community leaders as participants. Data was procured through interviews, observation, and library research. Data analysis involves data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicated that: 1) planning is executed through needs identification and program drafting involving the community, 2) program implementation adheres to scheduled activities that reflect community priorities, needs, and environmental conditions, 3) outcomes manifest as an enhanced quality of life, and those who recognize the advantages of reading influence others yet to embrace active reading, 4) barriers include certain communities not lending support, while enthusiastic management, community participation, and robust stakeholder backing constitute supporting factors for Cibungur Community Reading Park's activities.

**Keywords:** Community Engagement, Literacy, Community Reading Park

### Abstrak

Rendahnya minat membaca bukan karena tidak adanya bahan bacaan, akan tetapi kegiatan membaca belum menjadi kebutuhan masyarakat. Banyak perpustakaan umum atau taman bacaan belum dimanfaatkan dengan baik oleh masyarakat. Perlu adanya strategi taman bacaan masyarakat yang tepat sehingga mampu mendorong dan mempercepat terwujudnya masyarakat pembelajar (learning society). Salah satu upaya yang dapat dilakukan adalah dengan melibatkan masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui strategi community engagement yang dilakukan meliputi perencanaan, pelaksanaan, hasil serta faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Subjek penelitian adalah tiga orang pengelola Taman Bacaan Masyarakat Cibungur, lima orang masyarakat sekitar dan dua orang tokoh masyarakat. Pengumpulan data diperoleh melalui wawancara, observasi dan studi pustakan. Adapun teknik analisis data dilakukan dengan mereduksi data yang diperoleh, menyajikan data, dan mengambil kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa; 1) perencanaan dilakukan melalui tahap identifikasi kebutuhan serta penyusunan program dengan melibatkan masyarakat, 2) pelaksanaan program dilakukan sesuai jadwal kegiatan sesuai prioritas dan kebutuhan masyarakat serta kondisi lingkungan sekitar, 3) hasilnya terdapat peningkatan kualitas hidup dan masyarakat yang merasakan kebermanfaatannya dari membaca bisa mempengaruhi masyarakat lainnya yang belum aktif membaca, 4) terdapat faktor yang menghambat seperti ada beberapa masyarakat yang tidak mendukung, sedangkan faktor pendukung terdiri dari semangat pengelola dan masyarakat yang tinggi serta stakeholder/ mitra yang mendukung penuh kegiatan Taman Bacaan Masyarakat.

**Kata kunci:** pelibatan masyarakat, Literasi, Taman Bacaan Masyarakat

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## INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of literacy, encompassing both reading and writing abilities, is a fundamental and indispensable talent that is imperative for every human. The current issue of a low literacy rate within the Indonesian populace has emerged as a significant matter of national importance, specifically within the realm of education. Numerous polls have repeatedly indicated a notable absence of enthusiasm for reading among the general population. Based on a research conducted in 2016 by Central Connecticut State University, it was found that Indonesia's literacy ranking was 60th out of 61 countries. This ranking suggests a minimal level of interest in reading among the Indonesian population, estimated at only 0.01 percent. Paradoxically, the nation exhibits a substantial proportion of internet users, including over fifty percent of the overall population. However, data from January 2018 reveals that a meager three percent of Indonesian adults employ smartphones for the purpose of digital reading (Rossa & Nadia, 2018).

The aforementioned figures highlight that the prevailing lack of enthusiasm towards reading in Indonesia cannot be primarily attributed to the accessibility of reading materials. Instead, it may be related to the absence of a compelling necessity for reading among the majority of the Indonesian population. Within this particular setting, community-based initiatives, such as the Community Reading Park assume a substantial role in addressing the issue of illiteracy and fostering a culture centered around reading (Hayati & Suryono, 2015; Kendal, 2017; Nurhayati et al., 2020). According to Suryadi (2009), the term "Community Reading Park" refers to establishments that provide reading materials with the purpose of promoting a reading culture and developing libraries within local communities (Rukanda et al., 2020; Septiarti et al., 2020). These Parks effectively address the varied information requirements of communities, thereby augmenting their understanding, expertise, and competencies.

Despite the presence of several programs, such as Community Reading Parks, their complete potential remains unexplored due to inadequate administration and insufficient community involvement. Frequently managed by community volunteers, these initiatives may exhibit deficiencies in aesthetic appeal and efficient management, resulting in reduced levels of excitement towards reading-related endeavors. In order to tackle these difficulties, it is imperative to adopt a strategic approach that is in line with the demands of the community and expedites the development of a society focused on continuous learning. The active participation of the community assumes great importance in bolstering literacy initiatives, ultimately cultivating a society that places a high regard on reading and the acquisition of information literacy skills (Nurhayati, Musa, et al., 2021).

Given these aforementioned factors, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the efficacy of a community engagement strategy in augmenting community literacy. This will be accomplished by a comprehensive examination of a specific case study, namely the implementation of a "Community Reading Park." This study seeks to examine the complex relationship between community participation, literacy initiatives, and the efficacy of tactics, with the objective of providing insights into the significance of community involvement in enhancing literacy and promoting lifelong learning.

## **Community Reading Parks**

The Community Reading Park is an establishment that offers reading material services to the local community, with a focus on creating activities aimed at fostering a reading culture and establishing libraries. The Community Reading Park is anticipated to foster and enhance individuals' inclination towards reading by means of diverse programs and services offered within the park. This initiative aims to enable those with a passion for reading and lifelong learning to actualize their aspirations. A community Reading Park can be defined as a purposefully established space by governmental bodies, individuals, or non-governmental organizations with its primary objective is to offer reading materials and cultivate a reading culture within the local community residing in proximity to the park (Dwiyantoro, 2019; Hayati & Suryono, 2015). A Community Reading Park can be understood as a designated space or establishment that offers a wide range of reading materials to cater to the diverse needs of the general populace, encompassing individuals of various age groups. Notably, the management and operation of this facility are undertaken by the community itself, with the primary objective of fostering and accommodating the community's collective enthusiasm for reading.

## **Community Engagement**

Community engagement, often referred to as community involvement, is a collaborative process wherein individuals get together within a shared geographic proximity, possess common interests, or face comparable circumstances, in order to address challenges that impact the well-being of such individuals (Lozano, 2011; Mullenbach et al., 2019). Community involvement refers to the active participation of communities in the planning, development, and management of services. Additionally, it may encompass several concerns that are relevant to the wider community, or it may pertain to addressing localized difficulties inside a neighborhood, such as criminal activities, substance abuse, or inadequate recreational amenities for children. Based on this comprehension, one can deduce that community involvement encompasses the active engagement of community members in the strategic formulation, execution, and administration of a given service. Community participation places emphasis on the domains of education, health, and economic growth within the local community. Based on this comprehension, it can be deduced that the approach of community engagement or community involvement in Community Reading Parks is a practice aimed at addressing the needs of the community by offering comprehensive resources (such as books, internet access, and training) through active participation from community members. The activities conducted at community reading centers should be derived from the specific requirements of the community, which are rooted in the challenges encountered by the community.

## **Community Literacy**

The origin of English literacy can be traced back to Latin, specifically the term "litera" which refers to letters and is commonly associated with the concept of literacy. When examined from a literal perspective, literacy refers to an individual's capacity to comprehend written text and produce written communication. Frequently, individuals possessing the ability to read and write are commonly referred to as literate, whilst those lacking such skills are commonly denoted as illiterates or classified as illiterate individuals. Furthermore, literacy can be defined as the acquisition of knowledge and comprehension of written materials (A. Aminah et al., 2020; Nurhayati, Musa, et al., 2021; Nurhayati et al., 2022; Nurhayati & Musa, 2020; Setiadi et al., 2023).

Literacy can be understood as a communal activity that encompasses specific abilities required for the effective communication and acquisition of written knowledge. Literacy refers to the utilization of practices that are positioned within social, historical, and cultural contexts, enabling individuals to construct and comprehend meaning through various forms of written communication. It involves a minimum level of implicit recognition of the correlation between textual norms and their respective usage contexts, and ideally, the capacity to engage in critical analysis of these correlations. The nature of literacy is dynamic rather than static, as it is influenced by specific purposes and varies both within and among discourse communities and cultures. This phenomenon encompasses a diverse array of cognitive capacities, encompassing both written and spoken language proficiency, genre knowledge, and cultural understanding. Literacy refers to the utilization of social, historical, and cultural contextual activities to generate and comprehend meaning via written communication. The acquisition of literacy necessitates a certain level of implicit awareness of the interplay between literary norms and their respective contexts, and ideally, the capacity to engage in critical reflection concerning these interactions. The dynamic nature of literacy, which can differ both within and within groups and cultures, necessitates a sensitivity to meaning and purpose. It is important to recognize that literacy is not a static concept. The acquisition of literacy necessitates a diverse set of cognitive capacities, proficiency in both written and oral language, familiarity with various genres, and an understanding of cultural contexts.

According to the aforementioned viewpoints, it can be posited that literacy is a communal occurrence characterized by the acquisition of abilities to generate and comprehend significance conveyed through written language. The acquisition and utilization of written communication skills encompass a range of competencies that are essential for literacy.

## METHODS

The research method used is the descriptive method using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is research conducted to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example, behavior, perceptions, motivations, or actions holistically and through descriptions in the form of words or language, in a context. naturally and by utilizing various natural methods (Sugiyono, 2023). The researchers used a qualitative approach because this research aimed to examine problems in Community Reading Parks's efforts to increase community literacy through community engagement strategies.

This research was conducted at the Cibungur Environmental Management Community Reading Parks Cibungur, which is located in Cibungur Village, RT 01 RW 10, Batujajar Village, Batujajar District, West Bandung Regency. The research subjects selected in this study were the first three managers of Community Reading Parks Cibungur to obtain information about the profile and management, as well as the process of implementing the *community engagement strategy* at Community Reading Parks Cibungur. Second, to obtain information about the level of literacy and community involvement, the researchers chose research subjects, namely the five community members around Community Reading Parks and two community leaders in Cibungur Village.

Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and literature study. Observations are used to observe directly the objective conditions of the process of implementing the *community engagement strategy* at Community Reading Parks Cibungur and the literacy level of the community around Community Reading Parks. Interviews are used by asking questions that are the focus of research to research subjects. Documentation studies were carried out by the authors to obtain information by utilizing sources in the form of notes or documentation,

literary sources in the form of textbooks, journals, papers, or documents belonging to Community Reading Parks Cubungur.

The data analysis technique uses data analysis developed by Miler and Huberman ( Sugiyono, 2009). The data analysis steps used in this study include:

- a. Data reduction, namely selecting important data, creating categories, and removing those that are not used.
- b. *Display* (data presentation), namely making charts or presenting data in patterns. The goal is to make it easier to read and draw conclusions.

Concluding, namely concluding each data that has been selected and made a pattern. These conclusions are temporary answers to research questions obtained by research as a result of interviews, documentation studies, and observations.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Based on the findings derived from interviews, observations, and documentation studies, the managers of Community Reading Parks undertake a preliminary assessment of community issues prior to commencing their engagement activities. These issues are categorized into four distinct domains, namely education, economics, health, and social. Following the identification of issues within the community, the manager proceeds to formulate and consolidate an activity plan. Based on the findings from interviews conducted with management personnel of Community Reading Parks, this study aims to identify the various forms of community engagement activities undertaken. This identification is achieved by examining the priority issues prevalent within the community, considering their significance and immediacy. The study further explores the potential positive effects of these activities on the community, while considering the managerial role of Community Reading Parks in facilitating such endeavors. Prior to developing an activity plan, the manager does an evaluation by initially delineating the factors that exert impact on the trajectory of the activities to be executed. In this scenario, the Community Reading Parks organization employs a SWOT analysis below:

- a. Strength
  - 1) Community Reading Park volunteers who are solid and have a highly militant spirit
  - 2) Adequate infrastructure in the field of reading materials including IT facilities
  - 3) Strong partner support consists of Perpusseru (Cocacola Foundation), Salman ITB Charity House, KMPI, FTBM JABAR, KPAD West Bandung Regency, West Bandung Regency Education Office, West Java Provincial Education Office, West Bandung Diskominfo, BPLHD, Village Government, RW, Karang Taruna.
- b. Weaknesses
  - 1) Minimal financial support
  - 2) Empowerment strategy that is not optimal and not innovative
  - 3) Limited volunteer capacity
- c. Opportunity
  - 1) Potential natural resources (a lot of empty land with fertile soil conditions)
  - 2) Potential human resources
- d. Threats
  - 1) The negative impact of the era of globalization
  - 2) Promiscuity

Based on the SWOT analysis carried out, the Community Reading Park manager manages what activities are following the needs of the community and can be facilitated with the facilities

and infrastructure owned by Community Reading Park Cibungur Environmental Management. Next, an activity plan was prepared to increase community literacy, especially in Cibungur Village, East Batujajar Village.

Implementation of activities in each field is carried out in stages by making a systematic schedule. The programs implemented are following the priorities and needs of the community. **First, in the field of education**, the activities organized are a synergy process between formal, informal, and non-formal education. In formal education, the Community Reading Parks manager facilitates activities through learning related to the knowledge learned at school, such as courses in mathematics, English, effective learning tips and tricks, and IT training. In the non-formal field, activities include writing, drama, public speaking, and IT training. Meanwhile, informally, the awarding of achievement scholarships aims to provide stimulation/stimulation to achieve for children and encourage parents to direct and educate their children to study hard. These programs also involve various aspects of society and *stakeholders*, starting from the National Library of Indonesia, Salman ITB Charity House, and KMPI which helps facilitate activity infrastructure including achievement scholarships, RW X Government as the highest policy maker in the village, DKM Miftahussalam Mosque to synergize program activities that by Community Reading Parks, LPM X (Community Representative Institution) to help socialize the program to the community, as well as people who work as teachers/lecturers and are still educated at tertiary institutions to help become teaching staff in every activity program in the education sector.

**Second, in the economic field**, *The* activities carried out facilitate the community to know and be aware of their potential and their need to maximize the wisdom potential of natural resources which are currently lacking. The Saluyu Residents Cooperative, which is the result of advocacy by the management for the Salman Amal House ITB, has a role in helping community business capital. The activity program in the Health Sector seeks to provide broad awareness and understanding of the importance of implementing the concept of healthy living. Advocacy was carried out at Batujajar Health Center, Salman ITB Charity House, East Batujajar Village Government. **Third, in the health sector**, the results of this curative health intervention through free treatment are the identification of disease trends and the level of public health, where currently many suffer from lung infections or TB due to the negative impacts of an unhealthy environment, such as pollution caused by chicken butcher waste, household waste, and poor community life patterns. The community's free medical treatment program was developed with a preventive program in collaboration with Salman ITB Health Corps, Batujajar Health Center through outreach activities on TB disease and how to avoid it, inspections, and medical check-ups for every citizen who is infected with TB disease, forming health cadres from youth and training on management and administration of PKK cadres, and the establishment of a health information center at Posyandu Village Cibungur by providing a collection of health reading materials in the Posyandu room. **Fourth, in the social field**, activities are aimed at raising public awareness of local wisdom that has now been eroded, namely the historical village of Cibungur as a development center, and the village of Santri, a cultural village that has a high spirit of cooperation and kinship.

Through the reading interest program with community engagement by Community Reading Park Cibungur Environmental Management, the community understands the importance of reading in their lives because it helps improve their quality of life in the educational, economic, social, and health fields. The increasing interest in reading among the public is evidenced by the increasing number of visits with an average number of visits per 1860 people/per month. People who feel the benefits of reading can influence other people who are not yet active in reading.

Community Reading Park Cibungur Environmental Management's efforts to increase interest in reading in the community have so far experienced various obstacles, including:

- 1) It takes quite a long time to carry out the process of building awareness of the community.
- 2) Not all communities fully support all Community Reading Parks activities and some even feel that they are being rivaled, such as in the field of religious education, especially the recitation programs organized by Community Reading Parks because they are afraid that their students will move to Community Reading Parks.

The supporting factors for the success of the reading interest program by Community Reading Park Cibungur Environmental Management consist of internal factors and external factors.

- 1) Internal factors, namely from within the Community Reading Parks manager himself who has a high volunteer spirit and militantly advocates through promotion, lobbying, and building Community Reading Park partnerships so that until now he has solid stakeholders and partners in helping to increase the success of *reading* interest in Cibungur Village. Support for adequate Community Reading Parks facilities and infrastructure both from IT facilities in the form of computers and internet access as well as a collection of reading materials in the form of 3143 books consisting of Religion, Skills, Literature and Fiction, Lessons. 74 pieces of Learning Videos (Skills, Religion, Tutorials)
- 2) external factors; thanks to the tenacity and militant enthusiasm of the volunteers to advocate, now the Cibungur Environmental Management Community Reading Parks has many *stakeholders* /partners who support all Community Reading Parks activities starting from the CocaCola Foundation Indonesia (CCFI) with its library, Salman ITB Charity House, We Still Care about Indonesia (KMPI), Indonesian Community Reading Center Forum, Diskominfo, Head of East Batujajar Village, West Bandung District Government through the Regional Library and Assets Office (KPAD), KBB Non-Formal Education Office, UPT Batujajar District through its Elementary School, Attarbiyah Community Center ( ACC), Center for Information and Counseling for Youth (PIKR) West Bandung, SMA Al-Bidayah Cangkorah.

## **Discussion**

Community engagement strategy planning carried out by Community Reading Park managers includes: a) identification of community problems into 4 fields, namely education, economics, health, and social, b) analyzing facilities and infrastructure and owned resources, c) determining types of activities based on problem priorities, d) preparing activity plans. From the research results, the Community Reading Parks manager has carried out activities systematically in the planning stage. Starting with the problem identification step carried out to obtain data on community learning needs. This step is carried out by interviewing and observing the community. It can be said conceptually that managers have carried out scientific activities by the concept of community education learning management which prioritizes learning identification. As evidenced by previous researchs that the identification of learning needs is the main element/starting point in compiling community education learning programs because learning programs must be following the learning needs to be implemented so that it is known that there is a mapping of learning needs (P. Y. A. Dewi & Primayana, 2021; Farnell, 2022; Nurhayati, 2015; Nurhayati, Nugraha, et al., 2021).

The next stage after problem identification is to carry out a SWOT analysis to see the facilities and infrastructure and resources owned by Community Reading Parks. Based on the results of the analysis, the facilities owned by Community Reading Parks are adapted to the needs of the community. The next step is to determine the program of activities taking into account the priority needs of the community and then develop an activity plan for each sector through a

daily schedule of activities. Involving the community starting from planning is one of the steps in the community engagement strategy. Experts stated that community involvement is a process that involves the community in planning, developing, and managing a service (S. Aminah & Prasetyo, 2018; Hermawan & Suryono, 2016; Rukanda et al., 2020; Widodo, 2018). Furthermore, the stages of community engagement include (O. C. Dewi, 2017; Hermawan & Suryono, 2016):

- a. Planning
- b. Implementation
- c. Utilization

The implementation of activities in each sector is carried out in stages with systematic scheduling management and depends on the priorities and needs of the community as well as the conditions of the surrounding environment. The education field is one of the motors in increasing community capacity, for this reason, the activity planning that has been prepared is a process of synergizing between formal, informal, and non-formal education. The economic field is a benchmark for the existence of additional income for the community obtained through community engagement. The activities carried out facilitate the community to know and be aware of their potential and their need to maximize the wisdom potential of natural resources which are currently lacking. In the Social Sector, activities are pursued to raise public awareness of the local wisdom of the community which has now been eroded, namely the historical village of Cibungur as a development center, the village of Santri, a cultural village that has a high spirit of cooperation and kinship. The health sector seeks to provide broad awareness and understanding of the importance of implementing the concept of healthy living. Advocacy was carried out at Batujajar Health Center, Salman ITB Charity House, East Batujajar Village Government. Based on the results of the research, the steps for implementing the program at Community Reading Parks as described above in line with findings which stated that the components that affect the process and quality of learning depend on *environmental input*, namely the situation and the existence of the environment, both physical, social and cultural where learning activities are carried out (Tristanti & Suryono, 2014).

Through the reading interest program with *community engagement* by Community Reading Parks Cibungur Environmental Management, the community understands the importance of reading in their lives because it helps improve their quality of life in the educational, economic, social, and health fields. People who feel the benefits of reading can influence other people who are not yet active in reading. Based on research, *community engagement* strategies can have a positive effect on increasing community literacy.

The Cibungur Environmental Management Community Reading Park's efforts to increase interest in reading in the community have so far experienced various obstacles, including It takes quite a long time to carry out the process of building awareness of the community, and not all communities fully support all Community Reading Parks activities and some even feel they are being competed in the field of education. religious education, especially the recitation program organized by Community Reading Parks because they are afraid that their students will move to Community Reading Parks.

The supporting factors for the success of the reading interest program by Community Reading Parks Cibungur Environmental Management consist of internal factors and external factors. Internal factors, namely from within the Community Reading Parks manager himself who has a high volunteer spirit as well as solid stakeholders and partners in helping to increase the success of reading interest in Kampung Cibungur. external factors; thanks to the tenacity and militant spirit of the volunteers to advocate, until now Community Reading Parks Cibungur



Environmental Management has many stakeholders /partners who support all Community Reading Parks activities.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of the research, it can be concluded that efforts to increase interest in reading by making Community Reading Parks a center for learning and community activities in particular Kampung Cibungur through the Community engagement strategy have a positive impact on improving the quality of life of the community. This is evidenced by the community being able to explore potential wisdom in the fields of education, economy, health, and society. Community engagement is an activity that actively involves the community to develop existing resources, community involvement has a focus on issues of health, education, and economic development. Increasing community literacy must be carried out by various parties. Community Reading Parks Cibungur is one of the drivers for the emergence of public awareness to read. To foster and maintain an interest in reading, the Community Reading Parks community must have good management. Involving the community in various Community Reading Parks activities provides many benefits, the community cares more because they feel helped by Community Reading Parks. People who feel the benefits of reading can influence other people who are not yet active in reading, which is called a domino effect. Thus every activity carried out by Community Reading Parks Cibungur gets a positive response from the community.

Community Reading Parks' engagement strategy demonstrates the potential of community involvement in addressing literacy challenges across various sectors. Through a comprehensive approach and collaboration with stakeholders, the program effectively enhances community literacy, promoting lifelong learning and holistic development. While challenges exist, the program's internal commitment and external partnerships contribute to its continued success and positive impact on community literacy levels.

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